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TO CONTRIBUTORS—All communications should be addressed to:

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*Manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or by stamps or their equivalent (postal order or imperial or international reply coupon).*

Annual subscription, including postage, home or abroad: 20/6 (except Canada, 20/-).

Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post.

Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2, and 6 Dean Street, London, W. 1.

Agents for Advertisements: T. B. BROWNE LTD., 163 Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C. 4.

Part 9, September 1951.

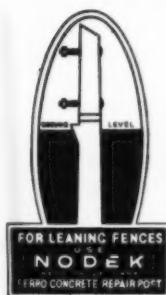
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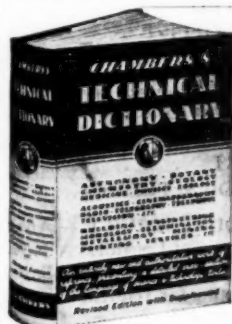
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# The Humorist

ROBERT SEEDS

ANDREAS of Tomba Trading was odd. He had no sense of humour at all. Visitors to Tomba did not notice this. That was simply because there were no visitors to Tomba. Nobody came there to visit, for there was nothing to see. Nobody passed through Tomba, for it was an ill road that led to it and there was no conceivable object in going further in that direction.

But this peculiarity of Andreas was remarked by the newly arrived European of the moment. He was usually a young man, his new cheap suit worn thin by the travelling, his new cheap suitcase plentifully cracked and seamy, his eyes confused beyond measure but brimful of a rather stupid and certainly ignorant hope. He was often a nephew, a cousin, or merely the young friend of a friend. He was seldom—but every now and again—a man rather old, but whose age was not to be noticed so much as his shifty, dissolute air.

He was always—this newly arrived European—a man come to reside in Tomba for four or five years, for ten years, even for twenty years, or perhaps for his lifetime. He would do business there. To do business in Tomba was just one way—though not very well known—of amassing piastres, francs belges, drachmas, dinars, and zlotys. It was, as has been said, even occasionally the means of 'picking up that odd (but so tricky to come by) half-sov, don't you know.'

This mixed European community was so small that it had retained its identity. It had never, that is to say, acquired a new one, but had remained an amorphous collection of various shades of white men gathered for a time to get money from the blacks—a package, as it were, thin-wrapped, absorbent, dropped into Africa. So O'Doul was O'Doul, Landau was Landau, Mihaelovitch was Mihaelovitch, Paylo was Paylo, Bael was Bael, and Andreas was not Andrew or Andy but remained as he had been—Andreas.

The newly arrived did not think it strange that Andreas was humourless. Tomba was not an amusing place. The most insistent jester might, sun-dried, have developed a leathery, witless tongue. What they did wonder at was that this man with no fun in him was deemed the supreme, the peerless, humorist of Tomba. 'There is Andreas,' they were told; or they were asked, 'You have encountered Andreas?'—and it was added, as a matter of course, 'He has been here some time; he does good business; and he is a very, very funny man!'

If this remark did not strike the man from Europe immediately as strange, it was only because he had not been long enough in Tomba to know Andreas well. He might think that the good, solemn man of small business was an adept at concealing his humour. But a close acquaintance with

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Andreas—whether of days, weeks, months, or years, for there was not much to know about the man—made it very clear that he neither saw jokes nor made them, that he had not, so to speak, the smallest of jests put away behind the dry-goods in his store, ready to be brought out unexpectedly to make a gay little sparkle in the eye of the African sun.

If the newcomer, curious after all this time (though curiosity wilts soon in the sullen heat of Tomba), inquired further, whether Andreas's character had changed with the years, then he was told: 'No! Why, no! Andreas has been here—well—so long a time. He has always been the same. He makes a little money and the very best jokes in Tomba. Now how much money have you sent home this month?' So the new man from Europe thought it strange that Andreas was reckoned a humorist.

It is not known whether the black men of Africa—the men who lived round and about the place—also thought this matter a strange one. But it is to be doubted. They were wholly concerned with the blankets and brass in the premises of Tomba Trading, rather than with the character of the man who would sell or exchange these his things with them. Nevertheless, it was they who had created, albeit indirectly, Andreas the Joker.

**B**LANKETS and brass—sold with diligence—sold well. Money collected to the account of Andreas, and much of this, Tomba-fashion, went monthly back home to his village. In this particular case the Tomba gains became converted into piastres—so many piastres that they were more easily grouped into pounds sterling—for the village of Andreas lay well-nigh hidden in a small pastel-coloured island in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The fawn, flat houses of his little village were made from the pale earth of the place; there was no paint, no glass; the village merged into the landscape from but a short distance off. But chiefly the village of Andreas was concealed from the greater part of the world by the veils of unimportance hanging, layer upon tenebrous, tenuous layer, over and around this ancient, slightest island.

Here the family of Andreas prospered after Andreas had begun to prosper with his Tomba Trading in Tomba. They bought more fields; they built up some substantial dowries; the

men held up their heads in the coffee-shop and the women let their tongues run swift and sweet (full of good news out of Africa) at the corners of the house-yards and when drawing water from the spring. As the few years passed, and three of the daughters became ready for marriage, the family of Andreas were able to contract for a policeman, the schoolmaster, and finally the likely young brother of a lawyer in the town as desirable grooms for these three.

But the family of Andreas did not let all this village renown make them forget that in Tomba, too, the years were passing, had passed. So they wrote to Andreas, sending word by each other, for none of the elder people could write: 'O grandson, brother, nephew, cousin—O son! we wonder is it not time that you came back to our little old house in our village.'

'I cannot,' Andreas answered, 'leave Tomba yet. Business is good. And have you forgotten that Maritza and Socrates have still to go on to secondary-school and that Takis, you say, is still without work?'

'Dear grandson, brother, nephew, cousin—dearest son,' they replied, 'what you say is true. But we grieve to think of you so long and alone in Africa. We say, and the village says too, it is time the Andreas was married.'

Then Andreas wrote to his mother and told her to find him a good girl for his wife. It was almost as if he had been at home: then he would have sat on a chair one day and said to his mother, cooking, that he wished her to find him a girl. Now Tomba and his island were an incredible number of miles apart, but thanks to the marvels of science—writing and the post—it was as if he had never left his own home.

The mother (good mother) wrote back, in the hand of the youngest married daughter, that she had a good girl for Andreas. 'She sent him a photograph. Thus again did science annihilate space and keep the little old world snug and homely: it was just as if the woman had taken her son to visit the girl she had found for him, taking coffee and a sweet the five of them—herself and her boy, the girl and her parents—in the house of the girl's family, so that Andreas might meet his girl.'

The brothers and sisters also wrote to Andreas, by the same post. 'Our mother,' said Elias, Despena, Androulla, Chloe, Maritza, and Socrates, 'has found you a very nice

girl. You will be very happy with her.' Only Takis did not write to his brother—but he was the workless, and doubtless too busy or idle.

'Dearest mother,' Andreas wrote back, 'I have seen the photograph of Niki, and what you tell me of her pleases my taste. Send her to me in half-a-year's time when I send you the money.'

It must not be thought that Andreas was rash, or his family feckless. The girl Niki brought a house and two fields, which would do very well for Maritza when she finished school and had a husband to find. And Andreas had read his mother's recommendations and, having seen the photograph, loved Niki.

He had, indeed, had a much longer time to study the photograph in Tomba—waiting for the next mail out—than he would have had to study the girl sucking and sipping in the house of her family. Then they would have sat for perhaps fifteen minutes and, having left, Andreas would have said to his mother: 'Yes, I love Niki,' or, in another case, 'No, mother, I do not love that girl.'

In fact it can easily be seen how clearly and sensibly Andreas and his family arranged these romantic affairs. It was certainly fortuitous, but also a tribute to their level thinking at what might have been a light-headed moment, for a love for a lifetime—for marriage—has a certain drunken glory about its beginning; it was therefore not only fortuitous that the problem of workless Takis was simultaneously solved.

Niki could not travel alone to Africa. That was obvious, even if the journey to Tomba had not been even more tortuous than most trans-African journeys. Takis could not find work in his island. That was equally obvious—or, rather, almost equally so, for some day, somehow, some kind of job *might* have descended as it were from Heaven.

Therefore it was arranged that Niki was escorted by Takis to Tomba. There, Andreas arranged, a fair enough sort of job was waiting for his brother in the recesses of Tomba Trading. There were blankets to sort, brasses to bring in and out, plenty to listen to from Andreas at the front of the store. And after a while—a year, perhaps, or eighteen months—the young man would have learnt trading ways, paid back, so to speak, most of his passage-money, and start to receive a wage or a share of the profits.

Thus it was all very well arranged for both

Takis and Niki. It was also well arranged for the family of Andreas, and for Andreas himself. It was certainly impossible for anyone to foresee the state of the pair at the end of their journey.

Travel-stain was to be expected. And they were dusty and even quite dirty when they got down from the truck that made the last lap of their journey—that groaned and jolted them and their three wooden chests and two split-sided suitcases into Tomba. Fatigue was to be expected. And they were so weary they swayed on their feet when Andreas lifted them down from the truck.

There was plenty of brown and hard green soap awaiting them. More than enough, for Tomba Trading stocked soap as well as blankets and brass. There was also some water awaiting them. So the travel-stain was prepared for. There were also two chairs on which Takis and Niki could sit and rest for two or three days, so that their force could come back to them. Andreas had had these two more chairs made. So the travel-fatigue was prepared for.

But, when she was taken down from the lorry in Tomba, the girl Niki was patently big with a child. That could not be foreseen. Certainly nobody could have planned for that.

It was really nobody's fault. It had fallen out that young Takis loved Niki; that young Niki loved Takis; that their love had begun a long time ago—considering 'long' in the light of their youth; that their love had continued and grown until it had burst custom's bonds; that the love of Niki and Takis would last—again remembering youth—for ever. It was really nobody's fault.

They had loved each other first when Takis had begun to be without work and Niki's mother had begun to keep an eye out for a suitable groom for her child. Love—even in a small pastel island veiled in antiquity—is not always a matter of meeting a good girl with your mother or considering a photograph or a letter long and hard and shrewdly.

Love does occasionally spring from some other source. It sprang, in the case of Takis and Niki, from a casual meeting in the scent of lemons at evening—they had, with others, come to watch a new well being dug in a garden—and from a second, half-planned encounter in the same place at high noon,



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when none else was there and Niki had worn a white dress with a thin, bright-red, shining, flexible belt sent to her that day by her sister who worked in the town.

So love flowered between them (for was not Takis a handsome boy and more kindly spoken than all the young men in the village, and could he not play small airs on his mandolin which had ribbons?), love flowered for Takis and Niki with the lemon-trees of the gardens, with the pinks and zinnias in the house-yards, with the hyacinths, the amaranth, and the small red tulips of the fields. Their love waxed round and bright and wholly shining as the moon that brought the pale colours of the country up through the night, so that darkness was defeated for Takis and Niki and any other solitary watcher at the door or window of a house. And—when the moon waned—this love did not wane. Neither did it wither when the wild-flowers withered, nor drop with the lemon-blossom from the height of a sweet-scented tree to lie as so many scattered, littered petals for anyone to walk on in the grass.

Niki and Takis loved each other, though no one told them to do so. Thus it was. It was neither to be expected nor, wholly, to be unexpected. 'We love, oh, how we do love each other,' they said to themselves, 'and nobody—nobody—must know!'

Nobody must know because, having learnt of the love, everybody would have put a stop to their seeing any more of each other. If a boy and girl met—well, say more than once—it was clear they would marry. And Takis had work to find, not a bride. And Niki, with a house and two fields, would find a good husband—provided there were no whispers of anyone else having been along, and most surely not the hint of a whisper of a jobless, lingering boy. So they met—when they could—in secret. They were probably as romantic lovers as there had been in the island, but they knew, with all in the island, that marriage was realism. They were lovers, not fools.

Thus they were when one day her mother called out to Niki: 'The mother of the Andreas has spoken, child. Put on your good dress. I will take you to her house now, that she may examine you better.' So the virgin Niki—for that she was, then—was brought to the house of Andreas's mother. She wore the modish magenta dress, that nobody knew did not become her at all, and she sat with her mother in front of Andreas's mother. There

was nobody else but these three in the house. Andreas's mother approved.

Niki and Takis had to do most of their thinking apart from each. Their snatched, secret meetings were neither frequent nor long. But this was no great hindrance, for the sum of their thinking was simple and brief. Niki said (to herself and to him): 'It is the Takis I love. And I must wed the Andreas.' Takis said (to himself and to her): 'I love you, Niki. But you are to marry my brother, who is rich, in work, and in Africa.' As there was nothing either of them could possibly do about it, there was nothing more to be said. All subsequent words were quite irrelevant.

Then Andreas sent for his brother to come with his girl. And that settled that.

'In Africa, this Tomba,' said Takis, 'I shall have work.'

'In your Tomba,' Niki said, 'I shall have you, in work.'

'We go there together,' they said, 'and none of them will be there in Tomba except the Andreas.'

There was a short silence before Niki asked: 'What kind of man is your brother?'

Takis thought and thought. But it seemed that he only added to the silence, rather than drew from it. 'I do not know,' he said, 'for I am not sure. He left long ago.'

'Oh,' Niki said, 'can you say nothing more about him than that?'

'Well,' said Takis after a while, 'I think that he is a sensible man and that he loves much his sisters and brothers.'

Certainly the distress of Niki and Takis was no less great because they knew they could do nothing to alter events. Their love, doubtless, was raised to an almost frenetic pitch by the knowledge of how it was to be taken away from the two of them. Their ardour was very great in those days with misery almost upon them.

'It is the Takis I love,' Niki had said, 'and if I stay here they will marry me off to some other.'

'I love you, Niki,' Takis had said, 'and I shall never find work in this island.'

It is also possible that, being young, they were not very sure of themselves—in the matter of persuading other people, that is. It might be that even a loving brother and a sensible man could better be persuaded by a means more persuasive than any words they could use. A brother would surely be full of

pity. A sensible man would surely believe his eyes.

It is possible. But it is not probable. The journey to Tomba did not last so long as to make things abundantly easy. The wedding in Tomba was to take place very soon after arrival. And it was young Takis and the slim young maid Niki who had to be seen by their families into the African boat. The young things were new to love—not clever at the subject. Yet it is possible.

One thing was abundantly clear. In setting sail for Africa Niki and Takis were doing the only sensible thing.

**P**REGNANT, the girl was lifted down from the lorry. Andreas set her on her feet, looked at her. Then he kissed his young brother and the young girl. He dusted them both, lightly. 'Plainly,' he said, 'you both need washing and rest. I believe there has also been some misunderstanding somewhere, but for the moment tell me what news do you bring from the little old village.' So, talking a little, he led them to the soap, the water, and the chairs—those things he had prepared for them and which it was clear they would use.

Afterwards—it was four days afterwards—Andreas gave a small party, a large party for Tomba. There was a score or so of European men, and the seven wives of Tomba, who now would soon number eight. The black serving-boys thought it a very grand party and so, for the matter of that, did the guests. There was food. There was drink. There were speeches. There were, above all, two new faces—and one of these female.

'And now,' spoke Andreas, 'comes my little surprise. On my left—see—my brother! On my right—see—the betrothed, his betrothed, who will soon be his wife.'

There were great cries of amaze, of boisterous dissent, from the men. They shouted various versions of 'What's all this about?', 'Come, now!', 'But what about *your* wife, Andreas, we came here to see?' There was a good deal of shouting and cheerful noise, and a great deal of astonishment, with Andreas solemn and calm standing above it.

Only the seven European wives let small, swift whispers of chatter slip up and down between them. They made only these little sibilant sounds, that might have been faint sighs of relief. The newcomers had rested four days in seclusion—now was their out-

bringing—but the eyes of European women are not veiled, nor are their ears stopped, nor are their minds incurious, even in Tomba.

'Yes, my friends, yes,' spoke big, solemn Andreas, smooth, rounded, and sweating a little in the heat, 'I know well that you expected *my* bride. For a long time now I have been telling you that my bride and my brother were coming. And for a long time now you have been kindly awaiting them, eager to welcome them. Thank you, my friends, thank you. Well, here they are. But with this little difference—it is my brother and *his* bride. Welcome them! Welcome them!'

Then Andreas sat down. But the men shouted him to his feet again. They had drunk much liquor. Normally movements and voices are languid in Tomba. They said that they would not let him get away with such a brief explanation of so long a deceit.

'It was no deceit, my friends,' said Andreas when he stood once again, facing them, 'it was no deceit. I do not deceive my friends. No,' he said, 'it was not that. It was . . .' he paused. 'It was . . .' he repeated. 'Yes,' he said loudly, triumphantly, 'it was a joke! And was it not a long and a very good joke? Ha, ha, ha . . . ha, ha—you thought I would marry. Me! Marry! Ha, ha.' He spoke, rather than laughed. 'But now,' he said after a moment, 'let us be done with my very good joke. You have all been good enough to bear with my jest—will you now be good enough to welcome to our community my brother, my new partner in Tomba Trading, along with that beautiful young lady his wife.' Then the toasts were drunk and more speeches made, here and there.

**T**HE business of Tomba was trade with the blacks. For no other purpose did a man come to that place.

The firm of Tomba Trading thrived. Its premises were much enlarged. The store grew bigger and bigger. On one side the senior partner lived in his house. On the other side the junior partner lived with his wife and two or three children in their house. The store was the central point. The other two houses were off-shoots, side-issues.

Some of the residents went back to their pieces of Europe. New residents—the young, smart-shabby men with the broken suitcases—came into Tomba. They thought the reputation of Andreas odd. Very seldom they

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remarked on it, for it is not usual to question what you are told when you are shown a new place. But very occasionally they questioned, or remembered to question after they had settled down and before they had themselves grown into pointing out to newcomers Andreas the humorist.

Once upon a time it was old Fischer who was asked to explain why they called Andreas so funny. Old Fischer told of that tremendous, lengthy joke played upon them by Andreas. Fischer remembered the party well. 'I remember so well,' he said, 'how surprised we all were. I remember also how cunningly Andreas played his joke. The girl's photograph he had always on his wall, before she arrived—on the wall of his store, I mean. No, I never guessed that it was all a joke. I am a polite man—such is my nature, to be always

polite—and I used to listen with attention while Andreas told me of this girl from his village. I used to examine with him the photograph whenever I came to the store. I was very polite while he told me about the bride that was coming. And,' he ended, 'and sometimes I used to envy him a little.'

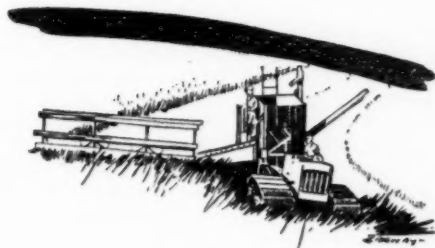
Old Fischer laughed as he nodded his head to himself, relishing what a great joke it had been. It was perhaps strange—for he had not laughed so much as all that—that there were at the same time tears in his dark-brown eyes. But then Fischer was an old Jew-man, sentimental as Germans are, and lonely for Frankfurt. It is known that Andreas joked so long and so loud in Tomba that he became, once and for all, Andreas the humorist. But it is not known whether Andreas—anywhere, ever—wept.

October First Story: The First instalment of *Angram Folly*, a Yorkshire story in two parts by Phyllis Bentley.

### Like Gold-Rimmed Snails

*Like gold-rimmed snails the teacher's eyes  
Move moistly to and fro  
Over her scholars, the sleek-haired  
Shy harvest-mice  
Hidden in the corn of learning;  
And meekly nibbling the rich grain  
They watch the pale folded poppy of her mouth  
Drugging a morning.  
As the ichneumon grub  
Invests the rich warm larval body  
Of purple emperor-moth and drains it into dust,  
So she sucks knowledge dry; an atlas in her hand  
Is like last month's newspaper, stale;  
The blackboard is the Ethiop tombstone  
Of the science of the Arabians;  
Empires lie inert in burial within her desk.  
The barn-owl, though he has but few words in his book,  
Could make a better tale;  
And light-limbed elder leaning by the bridge  
Knows more of men and prayers,  
When far away the sleepy cuckoos call  
Tender as sad church bells,  
And knee-deep in the billowing foam  
Of fool's-parsley, bedewed  
And crowned with fragile flowers  
She plays Cressida at dusk  
With pining scents.*

AVERIL MORLEY.



## Picture of a Combine-Harvester

MARION J. HUME

ALEC and I must have driven a combine-harvester hundreds of miles between us and in every sort of crop under every sort of condition. Pa bought a couple very early on, so my brother Alec and I were in right from the start and I suppose we've had more experience of combines than anyone in the country. Pa kept the small one for our own use, but the big one he hired out complete with operators—that is Alec and me.

Alec was the brains and I was the brawn, and together we made a good team. He would do all the tinkering with screens and setting of the fans and shakers and I would do all the heaving and pushing and pulling, look after the sacks, and put a hefty, albeit an occasionally blundering, shoulder to any wheel that needed it.

In those early days combines were designed to give a lot more opportunities for cutting and bruising and squashing my big clumsy fingers than they do now. I've learnt a lot of dodges since then and I don't get hacked about quite so much, though I'm still pretty good at getting myself spitted on the hooks for the sacks, or skinning my palm on an obstinate nut.

Every summer we used to find enough work to keep us busy cutting for about ten weeks with scarcely a break, sometimes travelling pretty fair distances. We've cut oats on the bleakest and steepest of hillsides, where the slopes were too abrupt to work properly. We've cut wheat on the fat plains, where the crop was almost too heavy to go through the

drum. We've cut barley so choked with weeds that the screens blocked with thistle-heads and the grain poured out at the back like rain. We've picked up peas so dry that they sounded in the tank like skeletons dancing on a tin shed. We've snatched grain in a bad year so wet that it has clung to the knife, twined round the reel, jammed in the dividers, blocked on the beater-bars, and generally made life so hideous that we cursed the very conception of combine-harvesting. But there was always a day when the sun returned and exorcised the spirit of dampness. It struck to the heart of the field and the moisture slunk away. Towards noon a subtle crispness crept over the breathing corn; its life became more intense; it lived more abundantly in its final hours and a whisper of anticipation crept among the robust stems.

These were the days when it was good to live—when the sun poured out its well-being and splashed gold into our harvest; when the corn dashed on to the cutter-bar with a joyful rustle and leapt into the machine with a zesty whoosh; when the grain poured into the sacks like a mountain-stream and Alec pulled out the throttle another notch. Then it was off shirts and round the field away with never a stop—shoving off the sacks at the corners, hitching up the empties, damp with sweat and grimed with dust, and the golden square growing smaller with every round and the neat rows of straw patterning the field.

I think it's true, too, when I say we've driven hundreds of miles. Take a square ten-

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acre field, ten chains a side, and you'll find that once round for the first cut you travel half-a-mile. Altogether, cutting five feet wide at a time, you travel sixteen and a half miles before you've finished—and that's only ten acres. So you see we cover a fair distance each summer.

**Y**ET to me a combine was never a wonderful animal until I heard Alec giving a lecture on one of the latest models to a group of students. Alec, as I said, was the brains of our team and knew more about the guts of a combine than any man alive, since we had had one right from the word go; so it was uncommonly sensible on somebody's part when they asked him to lecture; and of course I had to be there to give him moral support. Not that he needed it. Not our Alec. He just went straight in and told all he knew—and yet the way Alec told it, it was like a storybook, and the students listened open-mouthed as if he were relating some great adventure instead of telling merely a few simple facts.

As for me, that great brute standing there all shiny in its new red paint, its housing all glittering and streamlined, suddenly seemed not to be made of iron and steel at all, but to be painted on canvas, with a few trees and clouds in the background and a man flourishing a stick beside it. There was no hard edge to its outline—it became an impression only, and I realised afterwards that my brother was an artist. At the time, I felt a tremendous excitement as if I was on the brink of some great discovery even though Alec's stick was pointing out things that I already knew by heart and had known almost from childhood. I suppose what I was really discovering was beauty and romance in something I had always been too close to look at: and possibly sentiment, too, for unaccountably I wanted to cry.

Wearing his boiler-suit, Alec stood beside the streamlined monster and pointed with his stick to the cutter-bar, while the twenty students, and myself, the twenty-first, demonstrator's assistant, six foot one and large in proportion, thick fingers, clumsy boots and battered greasy cap, stood silently around.

'I'll start from the beginning, where the corn is first dressed on to the knife by the sails,' Alec said, 'and go right through the machine's digestive system.' He placed a

hand on the sails, and they turned slightly, as though a summer breeze had breathed through them. He went on to follow the path of the crop up into the drum, the great heart of the machine, where once an ear of corn passes it is never an ear of corn again. He talked of drum setting—the one and only setting for one crop, neither too close nor too wide. The students climbed on to the housing and peered through the panels at the top; they peeped through the trap-doors in the sides; they crawled underneath and looked up. The trap-doors became frames for inquiring heads and wide eager eyes and the framework was alive with arms and legs.

Alec went on talking. He talked about the different types of beater-bars, the speed of running, correct clearances, and, although I knew it all on my head, I went on listening with eyes as wide as any, almost forgetting that it was my job to point to the parts he was talking about. The story unfolded further. It told of what happened to the stray ears that got through unthreshed, of the adventures of the grains as they passed over the screens, of the passage of the straw over the walkers, until finally straw, chaff, and cleaned grain came tumbling each from its own outlet.

The students climbed down from the top and became engulfed in turn in the cavity at the back, and I also, although I had a hundred thousand times been engulfed in a similar cavity, cursing as I strained at a mass of damp straw or tangled weed, had to take a peep at the straw walkers seen on this new impressionist canvas.

**N**OW we'll have a look at the machine going,' said Alec. 'Everyone stand clear.'

This was my cue to start the engine, so I emerged from inside the machine and got going. I was positively excited about seeing it work—I who was born on one, as you might say. I cranked the engine until it roared up, throttled down, put the handle methodically back into place, and stood back expectantly.

Slowly Alec engaged the clutch. The engine changed key slightly as it took the strain, and then suddenly everything was in motion. Believe it or not, I went tingly all over. Majestically the sails swept round. Frantically the knife flashed to and fro. The empty canvases rushed towards the drum, hurrying up the slope with nothing. Inside, the drum



## THE BOY WHO SAVED A FAMOUS PAPER

twirled with a hum and a roar, the walkers marched to and fro, the screens agitated gently. Outside, a mass of pulleys and belts and chains turned, some hurriedly, some slowly, and the whole mechanism shook regularly with a mighty rushing hum. It was marvellous!

Alec picked up a solitary sheaf of corn that was lying on the ground beside him, lent for the demonstration, cut the band, and scattered the corn on the platform. It whisked up between the canvases and vanished with a rush and a roar. Swallowed! Straw shook loosely from the back and a thin stream of corn sifted into the grain-tank, and we all

of us believed. We had witnessed a miracle.

The lecture was over and the students went back to their lessons. I helped Alec put the machine away and sheet up, even dumber than usual. I did just manage to say: 'That was damn good, ol' boy,' but I was in a hurry to get down to the village before the shop shut. I wanted to buy a box of paints.

I was in time. The shop was still open, and that was the beginning of the career of George Brown, artist. My painting's mostly done in the winter—reminiscences of the atmosphere I suck up during the summer. Next year I'm trying for the Academy. Wish me luck.



## The Boy who Saved a Famous Paper

J. P. COLLINS

ON the brink of Mr Gladstone's electoral triumph and return to power in 1880 it was known throughout London's clubland that there had long been growing differences between the owner and the editor of that chameleonic organ, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. For six or seven years—something like half its life, in fact—this tension had waged in silence, leaving the owner in opposition, as it were, with his own paper. People had forgotten, somehow, that the proprietor in question, George Murray Smith, had any party leanings of his own. From 1865 onwards he had borne the cost and maintenance of Frederick Greenwood's idea of a leader-writer's paper with a Thackerayan title, and had sustained continuous loss almost without a murmur.

The start of the paper was promising enough, for Greenwood collected a group of writers around him equal to deserving that tired word 'brilliant.' But his Anti-Jacobin drift developed into a campaign for Disraeli,

and his salary of £2000 a year was beginning to chafe a merchant prince like Smith, who had succeeded his father early in life and improvised or acquired a mixture of businesses with revenue and success. By 1880 he had decided to hand the paper over to his daughter and son-in-law, Mrs and Mr Henry Yates Thompson, and, though Thompson's taste ran less towards the daily paper than to old illuminated missals and high-priced incunabula, he had Liberal notions and had held a minor official post when the party was last in power. Anyone could see how convenient an addition he would be with a well-known daily in his pocket to cheer the Liberal camp.

Greenwood's claim on the public memory still is that he put the national Treasury in the way of securing a formidable parcel of shares in the Suez Canal, and, after drawing handsome revenue ever since, we find it inconvenient to relinquish our rights even today. The rough edge of the deal came to

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Smith, however, when Greenwood rejected the opportunity for his paper to announce the deal in advance of its rivals and, though this counted at the time as quixotic magnanimity, Smith had reason to take a very different view. At any rate, when it came to parting with the paper, he preferred the family arrangement already described. For one thing, Greenwood had offered a contemptible figure, far short of his well-known estimate of the organ as 'spiritually his own,' and could hardly be surprised at a refusal. Doubtless the cold rejoinder, however, may have led to the episode now to be related, I believe, for the first time in print. It was recounted to me in 1918 by the hero, Henry Leslie, without a breath of vanity, especially as he begged me to keep it to myself until the principals had all passed away, and the moment seemed ripe.

Another point for emphasis was Smith's notorious disinterestedness. Besides the *Pall Mall Gazette*, he had founded the *Cornhill Magazine* and the publishing firm of Smith, Elder & Co. (now merged in the house of Murray). This says nothing of a prosperous bank and sundry interests in the City, and the friendships he had made with Thackeray, the Brontës, and the Brownings, and other illustrious writers who had come to him as literary clients and remained intimate as well as grateful. But he is best remembered by the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and who ever paid such a price to certify his faith as hero-worshipper and patriot?

TO resume our story, the day arrived for Greenwood's departure, a sunlit Saturday, and the first of May, though it brought no word of the new appointment. Those who fancied the young Oxford rationalist, John Morley, as a shrewd exponent of Liberal policy, had to admit he had more than once shied at 'afternoon journalism.' Yet his cool grey style and his north-country accent had won with the new house of Macmillan in spite of the firm's Broad Church proclivities; and in such a progressive quarter a comfortable daily under a large-minded owner might prove irresistible after all. Nor was there any clue to the secret of the appointment outside the brain of the bald and bearded proprietor who sat at his desk on a first-floor room above his bank in Pall Mall, revolving these and other speculations, grave and various.

The first person to be admitted to the right solution was the office-boy, Henry Leslie, a lad of keen intelligence, with penetration enough to make the most of a good plain schooling. He had gained Smith's confidence as one in his teens who had made very few mistakes. What is more to our purpose, he had observation enough to note his master's restlessness and ascribe it to the weighty business still ahead. Towards midday Smith inquired if Leslie had any fixtures for his free afternoon, and, on being reassured, asked him to stay on after the staff had left. He was to remain at his post below till three o'clock, admit a visitor, and show him upstairs without a word.

The boy knew Mr Morley by sight as a contributor and visitor at the 'P.M.G.' office. This was in Northumberland Street, Charing Cross—now included in Northumberland Avenue—where Smith had placed him for a time to accustom him to printing ways. Leslie answered the street-bell and showed the visitor upstairs, returning below until Smith rang for him a few minutes later. When Leslie went up, the two men were chatting briskly in preparation for Monday's paper, and all proprietorial worries had vanished.

The lad was told to go and ask the head printer to let him have a complete proof of all set matter in stock—that is, of course, typeset articles, letters, etc., awaiting use on any suitable day. The boy went off on his errand, but was staggered by the meagreness of the results, simply a couple of miserable slips of paper filled with stale or unrelated paragraphs, such as every self-respecting printery clears away each week or less. When Leslie asked if this was all, the printer bade him tell Mr Smith with his compliments that the order had been given by Mr Greenwood to clear the decks, and not to trouble Mr Smith, because he had worries enough. Never was a show of considerateness so insincere, and the boy as he came away realised, not for the first time, how his master had been victimised through his trust in others. In a few minutes he had placed the packet on the chief's desk, but when he began to repeat the printer's message there was no one listening. The two men were staring blankly at the flat missive, comparing it with the bulk they had expected.

Leslie had hardly returned to his place below when he was recalled and lectured with unusual asperity on having made a mistake

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for once. Where was the bundle of proof he had been sent for? Then came the ruthless explanation that sent the owner into profounder gloom than ever. While Mr Morley looked on with a frown, Mr Smith had to listen to the brutal truth, and wonder how on earth a man in charge could obey an editor who was leaving, and neglect the interests of everybody else. Surely Greenwood must have been horribly cocksure of finding the whole concern fall into his lap, and have persuaded the staff to that effect. Finally, Smith blamed himself for having left so many things for chance while he was shaping non-essentials to his own satisfaction. But now, to find himself and his office thus lowered in the new editor's opinion was gall and wormwood for this proud and austere descendant of Scots, who had thriven so consistently by his own exertions and with so few adversities until now.

Smith assured Mr Morley he had kept away from the paper of late because he wanted not to seem interfering or anxious to hasten the departing editor; but let that pass. 'All I can say,' he added, 'is that this man has not treated me as fairly as I have treated him. But it is time we thought of you, Morley. Can you suggest anything useful to be done?'

The answer was curt and to the point. 'I see nothing. If there's only leader-matter to fill the paper on Monday, it simply can't appear—that's all.' He plunged his hands in his lowest pockets, and said no more. Mr Smith stood at the window looking gloomily out on to the 'sweet, shady side of Pall Mall,' and was probably realising what it would say in two days' time.

As the moments dragged on, the boy was aching to suggest something he had thought of on the way back from his fruitless errand. He felt he must speak out or perish. Turning to his master, he ventured: 'May I say a word, sir?'

Sharply Smith replied: 'Yes, of course, but don't waste time. You can see how worried we are.'

'Yes, sir. But isn't Mr Morley a member of the Athenæum Club?'

'Of course I am. I am a member of committee,' interposed Morley. 'But what on earth has that to do with you?'

'Nothing, sir, but I've always thought it was a place full of very clever gentlemen with a great library to help them about anything they wanted to know.' Both men were

knitting their brows almost with pain. 'Couldn't Mr Morley go across and ask his friends if they would write an article or two apiece and let us have the copy first thing to-morrow morning? Then we could arrange to fetch it, and we could book enough comps and readers to come and set it all and correct it, so as to have it all ready for Mr Morley on Monday morning when he arrives.'

AS the old invalid related all this to me in his feeble and unhurried way, I could feel the dramatic intensity of it all across the gulf of nearly forty years. As for himself, he told me before I left how it had thrilled him to watch the alteration in his master's features. The new editor's arrival had changed him back from long-sustained worry to a look of wholesale peace and relief, but then to be crushed to despair and rescued back to victory was an acute ordeal to a man so intent on all his business plans. But in this flush of triumph Smith was of too just a nature not to reveal what he felt from the depths of his heart. He walked across the room, and, taking the boy by both hands, he said in a voice moved with emotion: 'There is no doubt about it, Leslie, my lad. You have saved the paper. Hasn't he, Morley?'

By this time, however, Morley was through the door and halfway down the stairs to the street. Left alone, and smiling at the new turn of events, master and boy watched him walk swiftly across Pall Mall to his club and disappear. Then, breathing eagerly, Smith bade the lad go back to the printer and get him to book enough men for the Sunday task, on the usual terms of extra pay and something more. 'But, Leslie,' Smith added in warning, 'whatever you do, don't let any inkling out that our affairs were so nearly over the edge. Let it be supposed that these articles were all considered and arranged beforehand. Otherwise Greenwood might have the laugh at us after all.'

On the question of emergency staff Leslie had knowledge his master probably lacked. Smith was no doubt unaware how many comps and other hands in his pay were in the habit of adjourning to other offices after the Saturday shift so as to reap a night's wages in preparing one of the Sunday papers. Such men could easily have realised the value of this inside yarn to a rival concern and supplied it to a reporter at call, with a certainty of big

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circulation figures (for those days) about Greenwood's mean prank and its circumvention at the eleventh hour. But Leslie was the soul of discretion as well as gumption, and when he told me the story it had never seen print.

When Leslie got back he found owner and editor in an orgy of quiet glee. Morley was eloquent about his exploits as a pedlar of commissions to celebrated clubmen and authors, all to fill an organ in distress, but agape with emergency. Most of them were won over at hearing their colleague was the new editor, and presently he had enlisted a fair percentage for sundry 'columns' and 'halves' and miscellaneous personal oddments, but every one of them ringed alike with two paramount instructions. The contributions were to be absolutely legible, whatever else they were; and they must be deposited with the club steward before the writers left that evening. Then all that remained was for Leslie to call at breakfast-time on the Sunday morning to collect this medley of improvisations. And as he said himself: 'It was a very different packet from the other, you may be sure.'

Sure enough, the boy's impromptu scheme worked out to perfection, and London got its new version of the paper, wondering what on earth to make of it. Apart from Morley's leader and half-apologetic notes, there was a sprinkle of the day's news—quite as much as

Greenwood had ever allowed—and the rest was a mixed orchestra, marked more by variety than harmony, perhaps.

In a very few years Leslie was the manager, and popular in spite of his small staff and tenacity about outlay of any kind. When the Liberal regime ended, and the Astor regime began, the new editor, the Hon. Harry Cust, invited Leslie to stay on, and was startled by a curt refusal. The terms of their encounter may await another occasion, but at least the Hon. Harry bore no grudge. He had some gold cuff-links made as keepsakes for his friends, and in the pair which he sent Leslie (and which Leslie bequeathed to me) the design in gold surrounded by enamel makes a graceful monogram of the haunting letters 'P.M.G.'

By way of moral, one may ask why Morley never requited Leslie for his services in saving the organ that led him into Mr Gladstone's Cabinet, the Secretaryships for Ireland and India, and the unexpected honour of a title. So far as search can show, Leslie's name is never mentioned, either in Morley's *Recollections*, etc., or in the voluminous array of biographies, 'ologies, and 'ana that keep the paper's name alive. The one exception is Whyte's *The Life of W. T. Stead*, and its tribute to Leslie's character fitly extols him for loyalty of service and for his popularity among friends and colleagues.

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### A Wet Street on an Autumn Night

*A wet street on an autumn night,  
The gas-lamps gleaming down,  
And ship-masts showing high above  
The roofs of Sailor Town.  
September dusk, the river's song,  
The salty tang of foam—  
Quick footsteps to a waiting heart,  
'A wanderer come home.*

*A wet street on an autumn night—  
How shrill the sea-gulls cry!  
I shall see river-lamps and stars,  
Remember till I die  
The look of him, the laugh of him,  
His warm hands through the rain—  
The mournful hooting of the ship  
Bound down to sea again.*

JOAN POMFRET.



## A Little Fish

IAIN M. MURRAY

IN my reading the other day I came across Herrick's 'Ternary of Littles,' the scrap of verse he sent to a lady to accompany a little pipkin of jelly. You may remember the second-last triplet:

*A little stream best fits a little boat;  
A little lead best fits a little float;  
As my small pipe best fits my little note—*

the quintessence of quietness and mild content. And as I read through the poet's list of little things I realised that my fishing yesterday had a quality of littleness that would have fitted admirably into his poem. The whole day was small, but in proportion and delightful, like a Japanese garden in a tub, and the idea teased my mind as I sat on a sodden fairy knoll to eat my spare lunch and looked down at the river swirling round a bend twenty feet below me. It had risen and was rising, but it was still a small stream. At one time in my life I could have leapt it almost anywhere, but now even the tributary burns were swelling as I passed them by and I knew there would be wet feet on the way back. All Skye rivers are small and short, and this is one of the smallest, but now it was impressive, like a small man full of spring and muscle—a sort of Alan Breck of rivers.

My rod was small, nine foot three, and light, and my fly was not large, a No. 7 Dunkeld. Indeed, my very ambitions had been humble on the setting out, as I had no more in mind than a few brown-trout for

breakfast and had thought of greater things only after news gathered on the way. The grilse were in, and the incessant spate, blessedly hindering the nets, had sent them to the small waters and the deep pools far away up in the moor.

There had been a scrap of blue in the west when I left home, but by the time the bus dropped me a vast curtain of rain had swept up the glen, and now my lunch was damp, my wrists were sodden, and the great drops roared and battered on my oilskin. It was an impossible day for fly, and I had no worms, and so far my catch consisted of three very small brown-trout, the typical starvelings that eke out a bare living in our sterile streams. All three had snatched at my salmon-fly, but by good fortune all were hooked by the lip and were returned to live again under their peat banks and grow big, or, one might say, a little less small.

In the highest pool to which I had ventured a small sea-trout had taken my fly at the full stretch of the line and I had seen his silver flanks glitter in the brown water before a vicious swirl of the current helped him to freedom. He might have been three-quarters of a pound, and half-a-dozen of his kind would have made the day for me. But that series of pools daunted me. The roar of the water as it fell in shallow leaps, the lashing of the rain, and the utter misery of a few black-faced sheep huddled under a small cliff set me homeward, ploughing through dripping



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bracken and quaking beds of sphagnum moss. Had there been a short way home I would gladly have taken it, but the moor was deadly and the only firm footing was by the running water.

AS I left the steep ground, the rain slackened, a watery sun showed me the streaming Coolins, and to my delight a peregrine falcon swept up the tiny gorge, a sight uncommon enough here to make something of the day. And so morosely to the fairy knoll, the damp sandwiches, and contemplation of the racing river.

Sitting there, there was borne in upon me, not for the first time, the strange fascination of a rising water. Only a month before, I had seen and heard the Tweed rising as I fished the Back of the Wall near Cornhill. Then the rhythm and the sound had been unmistakable—a series of long periodic surges rather than a slow, even movement; and here, in this small river, I saw the same thing, except that the rhythm was quicker and less powerful, just as the beating of the heart in a bird is quicker and more urgent than the pulse of a greater creature.

As I watched, the sound of the rain died, not slowly, but as if the taps of heaven had been turned off, and the sun, shining gloriously, lit up the last few flowers on the little river-flat to my left—a sprinkling of buttercups and hawkbits glittering bravely under the first few inches of flood-water. In perhaps ten minutes the day changed with all the inconsequence of Hebridean weather. My oilskin steamed gently, dried up, and felt blissfully warm. Across the river an old cock-grouse called boldly, and flew up the gorge as if to see the peregrine off his territory. The river was no more fishable than before, but at least it looked less forbidding, and the long walk to the road might be shortened by a few casts in the deeper, quieter reaches.

One such I came upon about a mile nearer home. Here a shallow cut-off filled with flood-water made a little island about twenty yards long covered with bog-myrtle and faded heather; and beyond the island the main stream, about five yards across, flowed fast and deep. It was a Tweed pool in miniature—the gravel spit, the glassy hang, the undercut bank, and the long flat tail, and it was extraordinarily difficult to fish. To cast over the side-stream and the island was easy, but

the result was useless. The line caught in the heather fringes, and the cast, with too short a travel in any case, swirled into the side and anchored under the overhang. To stand boldly on the little island was to be within fifteen feet of any possible fish, and the only compromise was to stand in the side-stream, crouching like a Test angler, throw straight across, and hope for the best. The trouble was the narrowness and speed of the river. Twice the fly landed on the lip of the farther bank and only by good fortune dropped off into the current instead of hanging up; but on the second occasion, near the tail of the pool, there was a boil which might have been the rise of a fish under the fly or the natural turmoil of water round a sunken mass of bank.

The sun, now penetrating all my numbed being, probably gave me spirit to go over the pool again—carelessly, it must be confessed, till near the end of the water. This time there was no mistake; indeed, I had no time to make any of those I find so easy. The knock, the plunge, and the scream of the reel came in successive moments, and all the delightful anxieties and agonies of the angler were upon me. Thrice he came out of the pool, slashing at my heavy cast with such vigour that I thought I had hooked my best sea-trout. Thrice he tore up the little pool and twice tried to get behind the sunken bank with its terrifying brush of drowned heather.

But after all he was a small fish and soon I was coaxing him to the side, into a bay where the flood-water had a sort of tiny dock, six inches deep. He was spent, and I did not give him time to rest, but, getting my old trout net under his tail, heaved him, neck and crop, on to the island. For a moment he threshed about, but a smooth stone did the priest's office, and, as I bent to touch his smooth, silvery body, I could smell the crushed leaves of the bog-myrtle and the drying heather-bells. He was a small grilse, five pounds weight, fresh-run from the sea, and he was beautiful.

I TOOK down my rod, turned my back to the still-rising river, and set my face to the road. There was a mile yet of possible casting water, but failure would have spoiled the day. You know how it is when fortune has smiled on you and you have managed your fishing decently for once in a way. You are relaxed.

## ACROSS EUROPE'S LARGEST GLACIER

The bog you must cross to reach the road is just another happening, not a vexation and a strain. The road, winding among the featureless moors, is delightfully firm under your feet. The weight of your bag is a delight and your rod is an enchanter's wand.

So I found it yesterday, and after a mile I came to a little road-bridge spanning a tributary of my river. There I sat, and I have never seen rowans so red, or moss so green, or hazel clusters so rich as on the banks of that little torrent. It seemed that there was a most satisfying contentment in the scaling down of the day's pleasures. For the moment the Isle became a sort of microcosm of the greater

world beyond it, and the far-distant village, bright in the sun against its framework of mountains, more satisfying than any vast concourse of mankind.

I do not say that I would not rather have had a salmon of ten or twenty pounds. I would, and there is a friend on Tweed who vows that he will live to see me get such a leviathan. But when I opened my bag at home and said to my seven-year-old daughter: 'I've only got one, quite a small one,' she said just the right thing, even if it tells the full story of my salmon-fishing. 'But, Dad, it's a huge one. I've never seen so huge a one before!'



## Across Europe's Largest Glacier *A Traverse of Norway's Jostedalsbreen*

MICHAEL B. MURPHY

LUNDE village lay at the northern end of the lake, timorous under the ice-crowned mountains that almost surrounded it. It was the starting-point of our journey across Norway's Jostedalsbreen, the largest glacier in Europe. Sitting on the green shearing a sheep were two girls who pointed out the house where Anders, the guide, lived. Ropes, mountaineering-boots, and ice-picks hung inside his doorway. The room where we waited was decorated with handwoven mats. There were sofas and rush-bottomed chairs, and on a desk stood photographs of people with whom Anders had crossed the glacier. The visitors-book had quite a few British and American names.

With a long rope over one shoulder of his shabby tweed jacket our guide appeared wearing ski-trousers and ankle-high boots. A

tall, well-built man of about sixty, he has a great reputation, having climbed with king and commoner from practically every part of the Continent.

Blocking the southern end of the boulder-strewn valley were the mountains, their sides slashed with rifts, down which streamed the huge bottle-green chunks of glacier.

Ahead of us Anders strode, each of his feet falling rhythmically on the right bank of the river on the first stage of our adventure. It made the going easier if you placed each foot where he did, but it needed concentration, and it was preferable to watch the beauty of the scene unfold as we climbed higher.

Anders found a path where there did not appear to be any. When he started to climb, he attacked the mountain front and rear, zig-zagging across its monstrous face till, weary

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of the struggle, it let us pass. Below, the river, fed by melted ice, hurtled over its rocky course and thundered into the lake. Its fury was awful, primeval in the compelling desolate silence.

The climb needed full effort, and, when we came almost level with the glacier on the opposite peak, one of us got a mild attack of vertigo, but recovered sufficiently to continue. All, excepting our guide, of course, felt light-headed and had a terrible sense of unreality, as if our body's movements were those of another.

A whim of the mountain gods may decide your death. Blue sky and white cloud tempered little of the savage beauty. We crossed torrents which had ripped through rock, and we fell flat, as boulders that our movements had loosened came rolling from above. Later, we saw the river as a trickle, small as the perspiration coursing down our spines.

At the top of the first peak we drank from an icy stream and rested in the sun by a deep lake of crystal green for five minutes. Other peaks in white glittering headdress surrounded us. Some wore their glacial crowns like masks, others like stiff curls, but from each opaquely-green mass waterfalls dribbled, draining the cold heart of the Jostedalreen.

OUR route now lay across the top of the mountain, traversing thin grass, then climbing smooth rock. Anders tested each step instinctively with his eyes, a foot quivering for an instant over the ground like a water-diviner's rod.

When we topped the rise we saw before us a glassy stretch of treachery pocked with crevasses at least a hundred feet deep, some of unknown depth. Feeding the rope through his hands Anders passed it to us after tying the end about his waist. We did the same, following behind like performing bears, as he stepped on the ice.

About two minutes later it happened. A cry, and we were flung down, desperately clinging to a tautening rope. Only Anders remained upright. His muscles were tensed as he hung grimly to the dragging line. 'He has fallen into a crevasse. Get up!' Anders yelled to us.

It was Michael who had disappeared. He had been last. The pull of the dangling body and the slippery floor made it difficult, but we managed to stagger to our feet. 'Pull slowly,'

we were ordered. Michael aided himself as best as he could with his feet against the icy wall. With relief, we saw his bewildered face appear over the edge.

It was an example of how death may spring at the lone climber. That particular crevasse had been too wide to jump across, so we had walked around it. However, the end had been packed with soft snow. Anders had tested its solidity with an ice-pick and decided that it would support us. It did, too. Michael admitted that he had wandered too near the edge. Without that rope and his companions, he would almost certainly have been killed.

Our progress slackened after that incident, but we still made good time and soon were plodding uphill through deep snow, which lay in a delicate shade of pink and had hundreds of long-legged insects crawling around, either dying or already dead. We crossed diagonally, crunching to the top to where, 1500 metres below, we could see Bojum village almost at the tip of the Fjaerlandfjord. Slipping and sliding with our arms flailing, we began the descent, trying to get a grip on the smooth icy snow. 'Slush along as if you were on skates,' Anders advised us. But it took time to get the knack, and each of us in turn came to grief, pitching towards a precipice till we were jerked to a standstill by the rope. How we blessed that rope, and the stout wrists of Anders!

Soon we were treading earth again. Now Anders left us. Solemnly we signed his book, in which are recorded the ascents climbers have made with him, and waved good-bye as he toiled back up the glacier.

ABOUT half-an-hour afterwards we reached the tree-line, where, breathlessly, we saw a road which seemed as far away then as it had from the top, though our legs were quivering from the rush down.

As we pushed through the bilberry bushes, rowan, and stunted Scots fir, a lemming yikkered angrily at the disturbance. Tripping on roots and in potholes, we arrived panting at the first of three boiling torrents, which poured on to the plain between slabs of smooth rock.

We had to climb up again a considerable distance before we found a reasonably safe crossing. Luckily, the other two streams proved less difficult to ford. Another hour and we were trudging through a field of cows,

## CLOTHES TO COME

and a few minutes later peering into the spotlessly scrubbed interior of a hut.

There were about fourteen of these huts at the head of the river. In them the dairymaids stay overnight, going up at evening to milk the cows, which are kept on the higher pastures during summer, and returning home after milking them again next morning.

When we asked for milk, a lovely fair girl filled a glass for each of us, then stood by with a jug ready to refill our glasses when we had finished the first. So, in cold creamy milk we toasted her and the mighty Jostedalsbreen, which had been vanquished once again. Then off we set for Fjaerland town to get, perhaps, something stronger.



## Clothes to Come

LAURENCE WILD

**A**FTER years of experimenting, clever scientists now claim that the rapid commercial development of new and cheaper fireproof, mothproof, crease-resisting, and unshrinkable synthetic clothing-materials has become possible. The scientists state that only an expert can detect any difference between their latest synthetic materials and those made from natural wool, silk, and fur. Some prophets say that people may soon be wearing all-synthetic clothes, which will be cheaper, but as good as those made from natural skins and fibres.

One of the scientists' most recent triumphs is nylon fur, lately developed in Canada. If all goes well the newcomer may become a strong competitor of natural fur, for nylon fur production-costs are well below those of the real thing. At present, however, it is hardly worth looking for a snappy nylon mink coat, because the Canadian Government, owners of the nylon fur patent, will not allow the material to be used for civilian garments just yet. To start with, they want the nylon fur output for warm clothes for armed forces in the Arctic, and until Service demands are satisfied we are unlikely to see nylon fur in the shops. Nevertheless, the

scientists who have developed the material are confident that they will be able to simulate natural fur so closely that few will be able to tell the difference. In fact, they already claim to have produced samples of nylon fur which have fooled the Eskimos.

It may well be that the fur trade will soon have to consider yet another newcomer in the form of merino ermine, which, it is hoped, will start a new industry for South Africa. The possibility of merino ermine fur coats and capes is the outcome of an experiment recently made in King William's Town, Cape Province. There a factory has produced the first cape to be made in the Union from a merino sheepskin treated by a special process to make it look like beaver fur—previously, skins suitable for the fur trade were sent abroad for treatment. Now, in addition to the manufacture of imitation beaver, the South Africans plan to use merino sheepskins to make coats and capes which look like ermine.

**O**F all the clothing materials, wool has probably the most imitators. During recent years several synthetic wool-like fibres,

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obtained from all sorts of queer materials, ranging from milk to monkey-nuts, have been developed as substitutes for natural wool. Many people are already familiar with 'Ardil,' or monkey-nut wool, the all-British product made from the protein left after monkey-nuts—groundnuts to some people—have been crushed to obtain arachis oil. This cream-coloured, wool-like material is as soft as, and cheaper than, natural wool. It does not shrink, and moths don't like it. It combines well with natural wool yarns, and experimental suits, costumes, and dresses, made from such union yarns, are giving good wear.

Yet another wool-like material is made from casein, the protein of milk. It was produced first in Italy, and then in America. It has also been made here and in other European countries. Casein fibres resemble wool in warmth and in affinity for wool dyes, but they are not as strong as natural wool fibres. This particular material, like 'Ardil,' is mixed with natural wool. It is crease-resistant, and almost unshrinkable, and it is used in the production of men's hats. It is manufactured by dissolving the milk protein in an alkali. The resulting liquid is squirted through a spinneret into a bath of sulphuric acid, which hardens the liquid into a thread. So nearly does this material resemble natural wool that a wool expert when asked which one of two garments, dyed alike, was made from milk, closely examined them both, and picked the wrong one.

Would you be surprised to hear that a wool-like yarn has been made from feathers? The idea is American. There they have succeeded in making from chicken feathers a yarn suitable for all sorts of knitted garments. Turkey, duck, and goose feathers are also used. It is said that this feather yarn is softer and lighter than wool material, that it will wash and dye, and that it can be woven into cloth, or mixed with other yarns. American textile-men consider that the idea is a practical proposition because of the large amount of poultry consumed in the States.

To-day one is apt to forget the cellulose wool developed in Germany just before the War. Tweeds manufactured from this material looked just like those made from natural wool. But they would have been of little interest outside Germany as, unlike the more recent synthetics, they cost considerably more than natural wool tweeds. Until recently, clothing made from codfish was

worn in Berlin. U.S. Army investigators found that during the war years German scientists evolved a method of using low-quality codfish and shrimps, not good enough for human consumption, for making a fibre similar to silk. The Germans were very enthusiastic about this fishy fibre when, mixed with rayon, it was woven into cloth.

**F**ABRICS and fibres made from glass are among our modern synthetics, though, of course, they can hardly be called new. History tells us that the Venetians used fibrous glass for decorative purposes away back in the 14th century. The first British patent for glass fibre, intended for use as lampwick, was taken out in 1822. Later on, in 1893, an American concern made glass yarns which were used with a silk warp for weaving the material for a magnificent dress valued at about £1250. The dress was worn by Georgia Cayvan, a leading actress of the day. Not long ago a much admired silk-like evening-dress, made from a specially-woven glass fabric, was worn at a public function by the wife of a British glass-technologist, and the gentleman himself wore a glass necktie. Curtains, tablecloths, lampshades, dresses, linings, and slippers are among the many articles made from glass fabrics. The fact that glass fabrics do not catch fire is, of course, a great point in their favour.

Are the days of all-synthetic clothes just around the corner? The sceptics ask what advantage is obtained by developing a number of new synthetic fibres when most of the natural fibres have, for centuries, adequately met the needs of mankind. More thoughtful folk point out that synthetic fibres are more stable, as regards price and production, than natural fibres. The synthetics, they say, do not have to contend with the uncertainties of nature and agriculture in the form of weather and crop-yield.

At the moment there is no doubt, of course, that, for clothing purposes, wool, cotton, and silk are still supreme. In view of the rapid advance of synthetic fibres since the end of the War, however, it seems quite likely that we may, in the near future, wear a much larger variety of clothing materials made from a mixture of natural and synthetic fibres, and, if these prove successful, the days of all-synthetic clothes may be nearer than many people think.





## Look to the Sky

MICHAEL HASTINGS

IT wasn't Owen's voice speaking through the cracked lips. It was barely a voice at all—just a whispering sigh which conveyed a grotesque suggestion of words. Collett, leaning across, was the only one in the rubber raft to catch them. 'There'll be . . . more room . . . now. Stretch . . . stretch . . . your legs.'

There might have been something else. Collett wasn't certain. He patted a shoulder with rough sympathy. He said: 'You'll be all right, old man.' Then his hand came away from the shoulder in a jerky, flinching movement. Collett wanted to laugh. Talking to a dead man! That was funny, wasn't it? Owen understood the joke. His lips had moved, sliding back from the set teeth into a grin which stayed fixed. Of course it was funny, and Collett could feel the laughter ripples rising from his stomach.

'Is the poor man dead?' Mrs Mellor's voice was like a splash of icy water. It sobered Collett, jolting his mind back from the edge of hysteria.

'I'm afraid he is, ma'am,' he replied crisply. He didn't mean to snap at her, it was just that he felt mad at himself for having so nearly slipped control. He thought: If I go crackers, we're as good as finished.

Mrs Mellor didn't join in the murmur which combined shock with pity. Her head rocked so that the thick flesh covering her jaws formed unsightly pouches. 'I thought he was going,' she said. 'I did some nursing

once.' Her grey eyes were hard, with an expression Collett resented as vicious satisfaction. 'He was married, with one child,' Mrs Mellor went on. She might have been talking of somebody who had died five hundred miles away. 'He was joining them—his wife and the boy—at Kingston. They'll have quite a claim.'

Collett looked away from her in disgust. She was always harping on this subject of compensation—talking of the blue leather suitcase which had gone down with the airliner. From the way she spoke it was plain she blamed the air-line company for everything—even the violent storm which had been one of the factors in the crash. And she made it sound not so much accident as deliberate, criminal neglect.

Collett glanced at the others to see how they were taking it. The slim, yellow-haired girl was crying a little, her face hidden. She always turned to Farrow when she was distressed. Not that he was much support in a crisis. No physique. Long arms and legs, a boyish face, with spectacles to give it a touch of maturity. Pleasant enough, in the right surroundings. But not the man to be adrift in a rubber raft miles from anywhere.

Right now Farrow looked next door to a corpse himself. The thin wash of colour had drained from his face. He didn't want to stare at the dead man; yet a horrible fascination was keeping his eyes fixed that way. And he was scarcely aware of the crying girl.

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Collett thought: Engaged, too. Now if she were mine. . . . What would he do? Could he do more than he was doing already? Rationing out the dwindling supplies of food and water. Searching the mocking circle of the horizon for sign of a ship. Taking the lead. . . .

There was one other in the raft—Parkin. He was the only one whose clothes still suggested the elaborate civilisation of the cities. Even now his jaws worked up and down on a blob of stale gum. Owen's death had not disturbed the rhythm of the chewing. Collett turned to him, staring into eyes which had long forgotten expression. Parkin shrugged his city-padded shoulders. 'He was pretty far gone when we picked him up,' he said. 'Maybe we shouldn't have pulled him out. He didn't know what was going on.'

'Something in that,' Collett murmured.

'We did the only thing possible,' said Mrs Mellor. 'Our rescue's long overdue. If only they'd come in time.'

Collett stared at her. She meant what she was saying. She'd no imagination; not a shred. The immensity of the sea meant nothing to her. 'She still saw it as a small patch of blue on a map. She'd paid her fare, the machine had come down, and she was entitled to be rescued. She was also entitled to compensation for the blue leather case. The muscles at the corners of Collett's mouth clamped down on a smile. It would be amusing afterwards. He could imagine himself saying to his pals: 'You know, there was a fat, middle-aged woman who escaped from the air-liner. She was in my raft, taking up more room than her fair share. . . .'

But was there to be an afterwards?

**C**HANCES would have been better had the rafts kept together. Darkness had defeated that, and the dawn revealed isolation. Collett had reached the stage of neither hoping, nor fearing. He didn't know how long they'd been drifting. Something had stopped his watch. Perhaps the shock when they ditched. Or else salt water had got into it. It was a good watch, too. It had been presented to him when he'd uncovered a fire in New Orleans, and proved it to be arson. He could still remember the dinner which had gone with the presentation. He wished he could have one course from it now. Just one course. He'd pick the barbecued ham. . . .

'Collett.' It was Parkin speaking. His words always came from one corner of his mouth and slipped out without hindering the gum-chewing. 'We'll have to do something about that.' He nodded his head towards the dead man.

'Sure, we'll have to do something,' Collett said. He knew what. He'd known from the moment he realised that even rescue couldn't save Owen. In anticipation it had seemed easy. Owen wasn't heavy. They'd dragged him in while he was alive, and when they had had to be careful. Nothing mattered now. Owen wouldn't so much as feel the shock of the water.

Yet something was paralysing Collett. He was flinching inside. He could see Owen's body in the water, refusing to sink, bobbing up and down like a cork. The raft would drift on in the calm water and the body would follow it. Just out of reach. An arm or a leg moving with grotesque semblance of life. Collett shivered, in spite of the cruel heat of the relentless sun. Suddenly, he was ashamed of his weakness. Fate had forced him into leadership, and he wasn't making the grade. He looked across, uncomfortably, at Parkin.

Parkin chewed steadily. 'No point in keeping him,' he said. For a moment there was something sardonic in his lack-lustre eyes. 'They'll take our word for it that he died. Best see if there's anything in his pockets, though.'

The yellow-haired girl had been looking, timidly. Now, with a quick twist of her body, she buried her face against Farrow.

'Does anyone know the right words to say?' It was Mrs Mellor. 'The company will have to arrange a proper memorial service. I shall insist on attending. They're not going to escape any of their obligations. As soon as we're rescued, I shall go straight to my solicitor. . . .'

Collett only heard snatches. There was a wallet in his hand. He felt ashamed, a vulgar intruder. There were stains on the wallet and the dye had run into the contents. Some of this marred the lower part of a photograph, adding to the damage of the sea-water. He looked at the young woman and the small girl, and, for a moment, saw them as they really were. He felt they were near, hovering above the water, looking down into the raft. He snapped the wallet closed.

'A bit more room, and we can stretch our legs,' said Parkin, stolidly chewing.

## LOOK TO THE SKY

**A**LTHOUGH it seemed they were all agreed to the disposal of Owen's body, it was not until the sun had gone down and the friendly darkness was gathering that Collett consigned the corpse to the waters. Nobody offered to help him, and the task was hard. It was like handling a scarecrow. He succeeded, though, with a final, awkward jerk. There was not much of a splash. The sea opened its mouth and swallowed. Collett turned away quickly, not daring to look for fear he should see a temporary resurrection.

Unexpectedly, Farrow said quietly: 'Into thy hands, O Lord.'

The girl with the yellow hair cried: 'It seems so terribly cold-blooded! Just dropping him into the water. Think of his poor wife—how she'll never know where he's resting. All we can say is we dropped him over the side—into a waste of water!' Her voice rose. Shriill. Frightened.

'Jane!' Farrow appealed. He put an arm round her slim shoulders and pulled her towards him. She lay quiet, like an exhausted child.

The silence which was all about them invaded the raft. Collett discovered a crumpled cigarette in his pocket. He smoothed it gently, careful to lose none of the tobacco. But he didn't light it. Just held it between his lips. So long as he left it that way he could pretend he was going to smoke in a minute. A bit later on, he imagined, a few puffs would be all the barrier between himself and madness.

There was another thought nagging at his brain. Had he done everything that could be done? He wasn't thinking of Owen, who couldn't have survived anyway. But what of these others and himself? The air-liner had come down into a calm sea, a sea which seemed exhausted after storm. The wind had freshened, that first night in the hours of darkness and confusion. Perhaps an improvised sail set then—or some organised attempt to rope the rafts together. . . .

Those were things he'd thought of too late. He'd blamed himself since, and found angry excuses. Was he the only one with a brain? Couldn't somebody else have known what to do? Had he ever wanted to be in charge? Secretly, he knew he was no leader. He knew his weakness. For all that, he was forced into taking control. Each one of them looked to him—including the city-smart Parkin. Even Mrs Mellor, though she didn't under-

stand just how serious things were with them all. But at least she regarded him as the intermediate recipient of her complaints against the company.

**C**OLLETT'S thoughts dried up. There was a movement close at his side. It was Parkin. In the gloom he could see the man's pale face, like a moon through haze. The lower portion had an independent motion, distorting, breaking the circle. Parkin said softly: 'Wanted to talk to you, old man. I think the others are asleep.'

'Or too far gone to care,' Collett answered him. 'I tell you, another day of this heat . . .'

'Exactly!' Parkin agreed eagerly. Like a man putting over a slick deal. 'There isn't much water, is there?'

Collett sighed, hesitated, then came out with the truth he'd been keeping to himself: 'About a teacup each.'

'I thought as much.' Parkin sounded almost pleased with the news. 'I've been keeping my eyes open. Working things out. You've done well, you know.'

'Thanks,' said Collett. Praise was good, even from Parkin. The next minute he was angry with himself. Why should Parkin's opinion please him? That dead pan! The utter negation of expression didn't deceive him. A man didn't turn his face into a mask in a matter of days, any more than he did it for an honest purpose.

'We're in some sort of a current, aren't we?' said Parkin. 'My reckoning is we're drifting eastwards. Should come to land that way, unless Central America's sunk overnight.'

Collett was cautious. 'Might happen. Trouble is I don't know where we came down. And don't forget that a flurry of wind would make the hell of a difference.' He fancied that he could hear Parkin's teeth busy with the gum.

'So the chances are pretty thin, Collett?'

'Pretty thin.'

'That's how I'd reckoned it.'

'I hope you're the only one who has.'

Parkin edged nearer. 'Weak bunch, eh? That naturalist fellow. . . .'

'Naturalist?'

'Yes, Farrow. Pictures of wild life. Pretty write-ups that go down well with kids and sentimental spinsters. You know the sort of thing.'

Collett grunted. 'Yes, I know it.' Well,

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it confirmed his judgment. When things became worse he couldn't look to Farrow for help.

'Queer,' said Parkin, 'the way some people seem marked for survival.'

'Meaning?' In spite of the darkness, Collett was aware of Parkin's smile. A mechanical action, as genuine as a dud note.

'Meaning the two of us, partner.' Collett stiffened. Parkin knew it. He said smoothly: 'Let's look at it the rational way. This time to-morrow they'll be as near dead as no matter—after hours of blazing torture. We'll stick it out, because we're tougher.'

Collett understood. He'd summed up the City man the right way—plain wolf. And the wolf's hackles were up. But he couldn't stop Parkin. Was it a horrible fascination? Or fear? He answered, not knowing what else to say: 'Mrs Mellor will probably survive as long as any of us. Determination will keep her going. She's all set to sue the company. There's a blue leather case she's lost.'

'The raft would be lighter without her. Drift faster.' Parkin's voice, already low, dropped to a hoarse whisper. 'Listen, Collett. I'm not asking you to do the dirty work. I guess you've had no experience. Me—I've knocked around places, and learned things. It'll be over in a matter of seconds. I can promise that. And there won't be any sounds. A hand in the right place—but never mind the way of it. Afterwards, to-morrow, you pretend we're clean out of water. That'll finish Farrow and the girl. We can go without. We're tough.'

'A simple matter of murder, huh?' Collett's voice was no more than a murmur. There was something revolting in the hand which reached out to touch him. He jerked his arm away.

'Don't put it like that, old man,' Parkin protested quickly. 'We've drifted out of the civilised world. All the codes and morals don't mean a thing now. It's nature's way—the survival of the fittest. These others are marked for death. So why let 'em linger?' He switched to a false heartiness. 'Do you think I'd suggest this if I thought there was a chance of them pulling through? There isn't—you know that. Some time to-morrow, or the day after at the most, you'll be dropping another corpse over the side. And then another. . . .'

The thought weakened Collett. It came to him that he was afraid of the suffering ahead.

Not for himself, physically; but afraid of what he would have to witness. He could hear the yellow-haired girl screaming as she went out of her mind. The screams were distant, coming back to him from the future. And he felt his skin go cold. His sense of leadership disintegrated. It had happened to him before, this failure to make the grade. Lost opportunities paraded accusingly. He went sick inside.

**P**ARKIN spoke softly, persuasively. 'Why leave the cards as they are—stacked against us? As things stand, it's curtains for all of us.'

'Not if a rescue plane comes along,' Collett objected.

Parkin became scornful. 'Sure. And we've every hope of that, haven't we? The number we've heard droning away overhead—only I reckon they must have all been thirty thousand feet too high.' It was like a battering-ram on Collett's weakened defences. There was a sneaking fifth-column voice inside him suggesting Parkin was right. Only a miracle could bring about a rescue, and Providence seemed to have run out of miracles.

'Given a little more time there might be hope for us,' Parkin urged. 'That water-supply, eked out between the two of us, and the raft lighter, drifting a bit faster. I may be kidding myself, but can you say my way doesn't give us just that extra bit in the way of a chance?' He paused, and his hand moved in the darkness. Collett knew. Parkin was wiping away sweat. Maybe a dab at his own forehead would not be amiss. The clamminess made him shrink.

'And who's to know afterwards? Just we two, Collett, telling the same story. Another thing. . . .'

Parkin made a swift movement, edging nearer. Collett could hear his breathing, laboured with the effort of talking softly. 'Another thing—I'll see you're well fixed when it's all over. I can lay my hands on money. I tell you, I've done some big deals in my time.'

It wasn't a boast. Collett sensed that. And, if anything, it added to his dislike of the man. But the persistent temptation, the betraying inner voice, eviscerated him. He wanted to denounce violently; but the words wouldn't come. He knew that he should have been angry; but instead of anger there was only weariness. It happened in spite of himself.

## LOOK TO THE SKY

The words were out before he had even a chance of despising himself for them. 'Give me another day, Parkin. If nothing happens to-morrow . . .'

Parkin was wolfishly shrewd. He knew he'd won. But there was to be temporising first. He could wait—just a little while. He gave Collett a friendly pat on the shoulder. 'I knew you'd see it the sensible way,' he said. 'But we'll do as you wish; give them a few more hours. Only, if I were you, I'd cut the water ration. Otherwise . . .'

'I'll cut it,' Collett promised. Anything to bring his shaming to an end. He'd broken; he knew that. There was no more leadership in him. From now on Parkin was the man. The wolf from the City, already experienced in jungle law.

'Good man. Now get some sleep,' said Parkin, drawing away.

But Collett couldn't rest. He sat there stiffly, staring into the dark negation which was the night. And some of the moisture on his face was not the sweat running.

**C**OLLETT did not sleep. His mind was a ravaged battleground. Something of himself, something he had always tried to believe was his real being, struggled against extinction.

He knew what was going to happen. He had noticed Parkin's hands more than once. He knew the strength in them as well as if they had grappled with him. And when darkness next came round those hands would close on the flabbiness which was Mrs Mellor's neck. Farrow and the yellow-haired girl would be out from sheer exhaustion. They wouldn't awaken—not even if Parkin blundered a little and there should be a gasping, choking cry. Or if they did . . . It could be left to Parkin, couldn't it? Collett thought: A wolf who's killed becomes a reckless wolf. He kills again—for the love of it.

Strangely, Collett thought little of his own danger. He sensed that Parkin could not face up to being on a raft alone. Parkin was the type who had to have a confederate. Any danger would come later—if they were rescued.

Suppose, though, Farrow and the yellow-haired girl proved tougher than anticipated. Sometimes the weak . . . He doubted it. But would it matter? There were always Parkin's hands. The thick, powerful fingers. And

there was neither mercy nor pity in the expressionless eyes.

Long before dawn Collett was ill with an inner sickness. That better self, which had been in control when he rationed the meagre supplies and assumed leadership, struggled to take charge of him again; wore itself out—like a captive bird beating the bars of a cage, until clutching, throbbing terror brought on the death weakness. He recognised his bid to gain time for the weakness it was. When next Parkin spoke to him he would nod agreement. He could do nothing else. It was Parkin, with his cold ruthlessness, who dominated the miniature world of the raft. And if Parkin voted for Death, three lives would end.

Perhaps the fatal moment lay further back. Had Owen lived . . . Collett felt that, with an ally, he could find the strength needed to fight Parkin. But where was he to find this ally? Mrs Mellor? A stupid woman who hadn't grasped the seriousness of their plight. What help could she give? And in Farrow there was someone weaker than himself. Farrow, who already looked a corpse, was useless. Collett didn't even think of the girl with the yellow hair. Possibly because he knew she was too near the crisis point, when her brain would snap.

He stirred slightly. Groped in his pocket for the crumpled cigarette. Perhaps the time had come to smoke. If he left it much longer Parkin would take half—take all, maybe. His searching fingers touched something harder. For several minutes he handled the object. Then he brought it out, slowly. It was a knife.

At first, Collett recoiled from the idea. But it was impossible to dismiss it from his mind. Again and again it returned, like an excited terrier worrying a kill. And once he became used to it, the horror went. He began to see it as a way of salvation. He could save those others from the last dreadful hours of agony. And he could save himself from becoming something loathsome. So he accepted it, and, in doing so, achieved a calmness of outlook. All his self-disgust was blown from him. He felt real again—unashamed.

He was able to think with surprising clearness. He would wait until dawn—a very little time now. He would search the horizon, just in case the miracle had happened at the last minute. Yet he knew in advance that he



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would find himself in the centre of a desolate circle of water. Then he would use the knife. A few slashes into the soft rubber of the raft. Swiftly. How fragile the thin covering between them and the water. No more than a film between life and death.

With thoughtful slowness he opened the knife and watched the dawn come up, mist ringed. Very slowly, the haze-rim of the circle expanded. Collett had the feeling that he was lord over an unknown world, that nothing could come into this world, no plane, no ship, because it was a place apart, unreachable.

Fantasy, of course. As if to prove this, there was a speck overhead, a circling speck.

He watched it lazily. A smile made the cracks on his lips open. He'd never envied a bird before—dark wings which could glide across the sky and find escape. Maybe it was Owen. Strange thought. If so, there would soon be more birds. Five more. Hovering . . . and swooping . . . where? Across the haze barrier to the mystery beyond?

He raised his clenched hand and the sharp blade of the knife caught the early rays of the sun. From the raft another hand moved. A quick snatch, gripping Collett's wrist. The knife quivered under strain. 'Don't be a fool, man! Don't you realise a buzzard's a land bird?'

It was Farrow crying out at him.

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### First Love

*Is she light-hearted still,  
And lovely as I remember—  
Spey of the golden laughter, Spey of the silver song?  
Fallen my flower of youth,  
And drear my days with December,  
But the thoughts of the heart turn back when the spell is strong!*

*Are her straths as green with summer,  
As kindly to those who love her,  
As tremulous still with April in the clear, blue tide of noon;  
As eager with young desire  
When the quiet of the sky above her  
Wakes like an opening rose in a dawn of June?*

*Serene do her woodlands wait,  
Adream in the autumn gloaming,  
Or white with the breath of winter—patient for joy again—  
Watching for spring's return  
Where the long, grey roads go roaming—  
Spring coming home to the glen through the wind and the rain?*

*Fairer than fair is that homeland  
The soul of a man sighs after;  
Dearer than dear to remembrance the country that sent him forth  
Where Spey of the silver song,  
Our Spey of the golden laughter,  
Cries to the hearts of her own from the heart of the North!*

*Ah! Where shall my longing rest  
Who may come no more at her calling?  
Where shall be ease for my sorrow, or comforting for my lack?  
For vain is the hard-won prize  
With the dusk of December falling,  
And barren the years between when the heart turns back!*

MARGARET WINEFRIDE SIMPSON.



## A Pianist's Way of Life

MARK HAMBOURG

(From the author's forthcoming *The Eighth Octave*.)

I AM often told by my friends that I am lucky to have a profession where I do not have to go to the same office every day and sit at a desk, or go down a mine, or do any form of monotonous work; but my real advantage is to have a profession which gives people pleasure. All the same, it is a hard life to be a professional pianist, though the compensations are great.

To begin with, there is no security in a pianist's career, except for a very few who may be exceptionally lucky or unusually businesslike, which is rare for an artist. Neither is there any pension awaiting the pianist when he gets old. He has to go on till he drops like a worn-out horse, and his means of existence comes to an end when he can no longer play.

Admittedly, some pianists save themselves by successful speculations on the Stock Exchange, and a few make rich marriages and so find security, but they do not generally improve their art by this. My master Leschetizky had interests in a pianoforte business in Warsaw which kept him going, and Paderewski owned an unsuccessful hotel. But I think I am right in believing that the most successful art in any medium is primarily bred from the struggle for existence, it may be because of the inherent virtue in the fight, or perhaps just because of the hard work contained in it. It is certainly true that not many artists of any kind have been born in the ruling classes of society. Almost all those who have arrived

there have reached such society by their talent and work.

Talent and personality, as we all know, can get a man anywhere, if he wants to get there enough. But I think I may claim for music, and more especially for the piano, an astonishingly wide and easy entry into every walk of life—an entry to kings, rulers, public men, heads of business, managers of shops, railway officials, seafaring men, waiters, daily workers, in fact all conditions of people who can make life more pleasant for the artist if they are interested.

Such privileges, however, are not to be got for nothing. The pianist has to sacrifice many pleasures for those he gains. Sport, for instance. Golf and swimming are the only two suitable for a pianist, and then only in moderation. Tennis is fatal for a pianist's arms and wrists, though not so bad for a violinist. My daughter Michal had a flair for tennis and would have played well if she could have worked at it, but it was tennis or piano, so tennis had to go by the board. The executant pianist must also give up a lot of time to the gruelling preparation required for public performance. He cannot just step on to the platform and play, even before a handful of people, without first having obtained complete command over mind and matter. This can only be done by long hours of planned practice, and on a lovely summer day when everyone is out after enjoyment, how hard it is to sit at home perfecting or memoris-

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ing some recalcitrant passage which will not toe the line. It is the vision of future agony on the platform, if he or she is not note perfect, which keeps the pianist at it.

This brings me to the reflection that actors have a great advantage over musicians in their preparation for public performance. They still suffer from first-night nerves even after having rehearsed umpteen times, but they can at least be word perfect and know their parts at subsequent performances. We pianists have much less possibility of recurring experience. Therefore I always advise young pianists to play the pieces they are engaged to play at concerts to everyone they can get to listen to them beforehand, even their daily-help.

It is memory that is the worst trouble—that modern complication of having to play everything without music, which has been forced on performers of to-day by the respect for exhibitionism so cherished in these times. And even this playing from memory has two sides to it, for if it is often confusing to memorise certain music, it is also impossible to perform difficult technical passages adequately with eyes glued to the written page. The artist must be able to play such passages without looking at the music so as to be able to rely on ocular help.

It is certain, however, that a definite talent exists which some have, and some lack, for making the best of themselves in public, quite apart from any gifts they may have otherwise, just as a racehorse shows his best paces before the crowd if he is a good horse. My teacher Leschetizky was a first-rate pianist as a young man and had a great success as a public player, but as he got older he became so nervous on the platform that he had to retire from playing concerts as he could no longer face the foot-lights.

Habit and environment are a support to the concert pianist. Thus some musicians are fortunate to come from an all-round musical family. I do myself. My father and mother were both musicians. My two brothers, Jan the violinist and Boris the 'cellist, excellent artists; my younger brother, Clement, an able pianist; and very gifted for the piano also was my sister Galia. Both my father's brothers were pianists. Charles, my cousin, is a well-known 'cellist and conductor. Michal, my daughter, follows in my footsteps. In the 17th century, when the family of John Sebastian Bach was so numerous in Saxony and

every member of it a musician, it became the habit in that country to call everyone who happened to be in the musical profession just a 'Bach.' I can think of two other families of the present day who are practically all musicians, the Goossens family and the Dolmetsches.

**B**EING born and bred in a musical environment certainly makes a good start for a concert career if a person has the requisite disposition. But, however well grounded they may be in music, most executant musicians lack academic education, and have to pick up crumbs of learning as they come across them. They have the advantage of one great source of knowledge, namely travel—travel not only in foreign countries, which of course is a tremendous education in itself, but also travel in their own country, meeting every class of people under all kinds of circumstances and hearing many shades of opinion. Moreover, wherever they go they find it an advantage to be artists, as people seem easily disposed to meet them halfway and to show them all they know and do.

Such travel, however, is tiring, and it is a part of the severe training of a concert pianist to be able to go long hours in the train, day after day when on tour, and still be able to present himself at his concerts to all appearance fresh and ready to give of his best. I have sometimes had to travel as much as forty-eight hours to give not more than thirty minutes of piano-playing, and as much as nine months to play only sixty hours in Australia. The conditions of travel, though, have undergone such a complete change during my life that time and space are now almost meaningless. Gone are the long and pleasant meanderings on a comfortable steamer across miles of sea, away from all mundane preoccupations; such a rest and refreshment to the artist. At the present time, he plays one evening in New York, and then, rushing through the heavens in an aeroplane, he performs the next day but one in Buenos Aires; back on the winged ship to London at 300 miles an hour, pauses for one night's recital there, and thinks nothing of arriving two days later to play in Johannesburg. It has always meant six weeks for me to reach Australia, but to-day no one would dream of taking more than a week to get there by plane if he was going on a business trip.

## A PIANIST'S WAY OF LIFE

But if the matter of distance has been done away, still for the travelling pianist, after his piano, there is nothing more important than his manager. In fact, the manager is an essential figure in the concert artist's career at all times. I have known a great many managers, some true friends, some merely business associates, some amusing, some even exciting. There is a difference between managers and those who call themselves by the grander name of impresario. The impresario pushes his artist by every means in his power—blurbs, publicity of all kinds, accurate and inaccurate, glitter, romantic stories, and he is often himself a striking personality. If the artist's concert is sold out under his auspices, he says to him: 'See what I have done for you, see what you owe to my skill in management!' If the concert is badly attended, he says: 'Look what you have done for yourself, no good at all! I am afraid you are no draw for the public.'

The less ebullient manager contents himself with the monetary side of concert-giving and exists on a percentage of what his artist makes. I met the son of one of my old managers only the other day who reminded me that when I came home from my first Australian tour, where I made a lot of money, that the first thing that greeted me on my arrival in London was the bill I owed his father for percentage. I had not yet received all the money due to me and I was annoyed at being so promptly dunned, and was also in a financial quandary. However, I managed to get an advance from my bank and sent a cheque for the amount, which was £800, 5s., and one halfpenny! I made out the cheque for £800, 5s. and put 'P.T.O.' on the bottom of the form. On the other side I had stuck a halfpenny stamp with disgust.

Of the impresarios I have had to deal with, one has remained a valued friend ever since I went to Brazil with him in 1927. This is Joe Fenston, 'Unomi' I used to call him during our tour in South America, where we had many lively times together.

In my youth, the impresario I best remember was the brilliant, if formidable, Daniel Mayer, who put Paderewski on the map. He put me, too, on the map in an unorthodox way by pushing me on to the platform at the end of another pianist's recital and asking the astonished audience to stay and hear me play. Thus did I make my debut in London. It was just a chance to get a hearing, and there is so

much of chance in an artist's life. Hermann Wolff, the experienced concert-agent of old days in Berlin, gave it as his opinion that if there was sixty per cent ability in any artist's success, there was also forty per cent luck. If an artist can persuade a business man to devote himself entirely to his service and concentrate on doing propaganda and publicity only for him—for every public man needs continual building up nowadays—that is the best way to achieve material success for both of them. But few business people have the unselfishness or the musical enthusiasm to undertake such a labour of love.

Talking of propaganda, I was amused to notice when lately looking through a book of programmes of the cycle of seven historical recitals which Anton Rubinstein gave in London about 1887 that on one page he confers a glowing testimonial on an international piano, on the next page he praises another make of instrument, and on the third page yet another. This was certainly impartiality! The last page of the programme book is entirely taken up by a big-lettered advertisement of a brand of champagne described as 'wine of the most recherché character at 90s. per dozen'! What would we give for vintage champagne at that price to-day?

Propaganda, publicity, advertisement, are not enough, though, without the artist himself being ready to deliver the goods whenever called upon, and as a young man, at any rate, to avail himself of any opportunity that presents itself to step into another artist's shoes if he gets the chance. Thus, when the Viennese concert-agent Albert Gutman offered me when I was a boy to take the place of a well-known pianist at a moment's notice, I did so, and from this fortunate and unexpected appearance I was further engaged to play with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

But even if fortune favours him, the concert pianist's life is still not an easy one. Playing as much as a hundred and twenty times a year, as I have had to do, with the accompanying travelling and anxiety, is wearing to the nerves, and there is no hard and fast rule how to meet this strain. Some pianists die at thirty, others like de Pachmann live to be eighty, and can continue playing well. Often if I feel unwell I will give a better performance than when I think I am fit, because I have to concentrate more than usual to overcome my physical weakness. I can never eat anything before playing, but Moritz Rosenthal used to stuff

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himself up with a couple of steaks before a concert. He said he could not play on an empty stomach. It was possibly good for his morale to fill himself up with strong meat, and he, too, certainly lived to be over eighty, and played better than most up to the end.

ANOTHER aspect of the pianist's life is how he reacts to criticism. It is true that critical ability seldom goes together with performing ability. I do not know of any first-rate performer who also writes musical criticism. Many would like to, no doubt, but their opinions would probably be considered biased. Schumann is the only executant musician to come to my mind who did so, and then I do not really know how good a performer he was, since his art was more creative than executive. But he was a brilliant writer about music in every form, and his criticisms, though severe, were always arresting and informative. Artists are often annoyed, however, at criticism of their performance by someone, well-informed though he may be, who is not able to play himself. But though adverse criticism is galling to the artist, he should not allow himself to be unduly worried by it, for criticism is a necessary astringent in every art and never prevented really great talent from coming to the top.

I have often been a guest at the Critics' Circle and have found the gatherings very spirited. The best one I attended was when Bernard Shaw described his experiences as a musical critic in the 'nineties. He was most amusing, and kept everyone laughing. He said that the softest job on any paper was to be musical critic. He had been a musical critic himself, so he knew something about it. It was one of those jobs which the editor never bothered about; he usually forgot the musical critic completely, who thus remained in his post for a number of years without anyone finding out that he knew very little about music.

Last time I was invited to the Critics' Circle I sat next the actress Lilian Braithwaite. I remarked to her that she looked pale and tired. 'So would you, dear Mark,' she answered, 'if you had been committing fifteen murders every night for the past year and a half, as I have!' Her play *Arsenic and Old Lace* was her crime medium. At least she did not have to commit new murders each night. They were always the same ones. And so the actor

scores over the pianist, who has to play different programmes at practically every successive concert, though he can murder them all if he is so minded!

Artists are generally supposed to lead what is called a Bohemian life. To the public this means sitting up all night, and staying in bed all day; much addiction to wine, women, and song; and only doing a spot of work when the fancy takes them. Such a way of life is no doubt attractive for a short time to the very young, but no pianist could play long public recitals or concertos with orchestra successfully without hours of quiet hard work and the practice of plain living. When a concert is over, it is another story, and the pianist can safely say to his soul: 'Let her rip!' and by gad she will!

Leschetizky used to tell his pupils that there were two ways of life for the pianist—an easy way and a hard way. The easy way was to get a post in an hotel or restaurant orchestra or appear in a music-hall and try to make a personality success of it. By doing this it is possible quickly to amass money and emerge as a popular favourite. The hard way is to aim at perfection in playing the best music in the best way. This course would be unlikely to sustain the artist in old age unless he was lucky enough to get recognition for his high qualities. Only thus could he enjoy the pleasures of the spirit and the flesh at the same time. But the rewards of integrity are only for the few. Choice of the way he will take is ruled by individual temperament, and each pianist has to judge for himself what he can attain.

THE sad thing about most people's way of life is that one lives on, 'to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,' without noticing the approach of Anno Domini, until one day one looks round at one's familiar friends and sees that everyone seems to be shrinking. I could not help being grimly amused when, suddenly realising the passing of time, I lately observed the appearance of my card-playing buddies at the Savage Club. The 'Crock Party.' Alas, that was the name for us all when they came to pass an evening with me. I myself was leaning on two sticks, which in my excess of disgust I dropped on my gouty toe as I clutched my hopeless cards, and exclaimed in agony: 'Hell's bells, that—as well as losing!' Next to me was Teddy, sitting on a rubber cushion to relieve his condition.



## FAIRS, FIRES, AND SPORT IN NOVA SCOTIA

Beyond him, More wielded an ephedrine spray, which he puffed at with a loud gasp every time he took a card. A fourth player, Joe, was accompanied by a hot-water bottle, pressing it alternately to his arm or to his chest to relieve his dicky heart. A fifth, Duggy, used a large asthma puffer to pump up his nose like a pair of bellows whilst he abjured everybody to play faster and declared that he was losing his shirt! In spite of all these frailties, each one was frenzied in his anxiety as to whether he was winning or losing, and shouting between his pains with the excitement of triumph or disappointment. We may be seared by autumn, but I hope we are no fallen leaves yet, and that the colour and fervour of our spirits still glows.

I felt this with renewed conviction when I occupied the platform only a few months ago at Covent Garden Opera House of many glorious memories, and this occasion was for

me the most glorious. I was celebrating my diamond jubilee, playing for the sixtieth year to the London musical public, who sat around me faithfully, and as ever we were riveted in spite of Father Time by the magnetism of Beethoven and Chopin. I felt it again with vigour when the same week I was entertained to a dinner by my lifelong friends at the Savage Club, our bond this time being not music, but fellowship, and good times enjoyed together.

And thus the pianist's way of life consists of many stages: beginning with preparation, dedication, presentation; next, exploitation of opportunity, transportation, glorification; finally, extenuation; and although the allotted span of my faithful friend the piano, the corner of my liver, is seven and a quarter octaves, no wonder it is extending by this strenuous way of life into an exciting and revivifying 'Eighth Octave.'



## Fairs, Fires, and Sport in Nova Scotia

F. G. LEVIEN

THE community fairs which take place about September in the towns and villages of Nova Scotia are looked forward to by those hard-working folk who live in such remote places as New Ross (originally known as Sherbrooke), in the south-west-central county of Lunenburg, as one of their few pleasurable outings. People come to these fairs in cars and on foot from many miles away, and an occasional old-fashioned buggy may be seen, but it is rare to see anyone riding a horse.

Even the Mounted Police use motor-cycles and cars. Their old, familiar scarlet tunic has

given way to a khaki shirt, worn with broad-brimmed hat, dark-blue riding-breeches, with a broad yellow stripe running down the sides, knee-length riding-boots, and spurs. The old scarlet kit is now donned on ceremonial occasions only.

This part of the province is 'dry,' and one of the duties of the Mounties at these fairs and elsewhere is to watch out for people having bottles, who take surreptitious drinks in the woods or in their cars. It is not unusual for cars to be stopped on the road and a search made for illegal goods, such as empty or partly

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empty bottles, or game shot out of season. As those who want drink will get it somehow, this cutting-off of supplies has the natural result of bringing illicit stills into existence, which manufacture far worse liquor at a much greater price than if legitimate drink were sold openly. Nevertheless, there is little drunkenness in Nova Scotia as a whole, and it is not illegal to keep drink in a private house.

At the fair 'bingo' goes on all day and until late at night. This is a game which has a great vogue in Canada at the present moment and is even more popular in America. The announcer calls the letter, which is one of the letters forming the name bingo, and a number after it, which is then covered on the square piece of paper the players buy for a few cents, and the first to cover a line in any direction is the winner, and is entitled to one of many prizes on view.

There are other games also in full swing, besides stalls for the sale of ice-cream, pop, and candies. Dancing takes place in the evening in a big wooden shed, where supper is provided. This supper is much looked forward to, being the gift of local people, who make quantities of cakes, salads, and so forth, and supply all that is necessary for a good feed in this land of plenty. Tea is the universal drink at all meals.

ONE of the chief attractions at the fairs is the weight-pulling by teams of oxen and horses. Oxen come first because they are used on the farms to a far greater extent than are horses. These oxen, as distinct from 'beefs'—as all store cattle are called—are mostly Ayrshires and Durhams, but Jerseys and Guernseys are popular breeds too on farms, and in some districts there are Herefords.

The horns of the oxen are tipped with brass, and, especially on fair-days, their yokes and harness are ornamented, the beasts themselves being exceedingly well-groomed and in fine condition. They come from very long distances. One blacksmith in the district informed me that farmers bring their oxen from as far away as a hundred miles to have them shod at his forge.

The oxen's shoes consist of two pieces of steel, with four nails to each, and are made to fit each section of the animals' cloven hooves. In shoeing, the oxen are put into a ramp, such as is used in England for loading horses into trains, and they wear a soft-leather fitting,

which comes halfway down their back, has an opening for the head and horns, and is tied underneath. The legs are shackled.

These beasts are, however, very docile when in the yoke, though some are fractious when being shod. One can see them travelling along the unpaved roads pulling a wooden sledge which is in flat contact with the ground. These runnerless sledges are called 'stone drags,' and are used for hauling heavy rocks, such as abound all over the country, when land is being cleared for agricultural or other purposes. The rocks are rolled on to these flat drags as it is impossible to lift such heavy weights on to trucks.

The weight-pulling competitions are held at all the many fairs. The contests take place on a flat piece of ground, specially prepared, in this hilly country, and with a sandy surface. A pull of a few feet is all that is necessary, since it is starting the load which presents the greatest difficulty, as was evident in the days of the old horse-buses in England. An average team of two oxen, themselves weighing a total of about 2530 lb., can pull a load of 5575 lb., made up of narrow wooden boxes each containing 200 lb. of sand. The owner stands in front, with a hand on the centre of the yoke, shouting and waving his whip, but he does not strike the beasts, nor is there any cruelty whatever.

Horses are of all types, but always very well matched, some of the Suffolk punches particularly so. They, too, are in splendid condition, and it seems as if they can pull a slightly heavier weight than the oxen. An average team of two horses, weighing 2560 lb. in all, can start and pull a load of 6400 lb. of similarly prepared boxes of sand on a similar flat wooden sledge or stone drag. At some of the bigger fairs, a team of oxen weighing 3660 lb. has recently pulled 6900 lb., giving, by the mode of reckoning in use, a percentage of 1.89; and a team of horses weighing 3250 lb. has pulled 8700 lb., the percentage in this case being 2.68.

EVERYBODY in Nova Scotia and in this New Ross community of 1500 to 2000 people seems to work hard, and it is an asset to have a big family—ten to fifteen or more children being by no means uncommon. Everyone owns his own comfortable wooden house, and in most cases it contains all the latest labour-saving appliances—for instance,

## FAIRS, FIRES, AND SPORT IN NOVA SCOTIA

an electric washing-machine, with mangle attached.

The country is one of endless woods and forests, as far as the eye can see, and there are practically no clear spaces except those made by man. Lakes and rivers abound everywhere. The chief industry is in lumber, and New Ross turns out a large quantity of barrels for packing the apples which grow in profusion in the nearby Annapolis Valley, where the Gravenstein variety appears to be the most popular. Trucks may be seen leaving here with a load of three hundred barrels on a special fitment, somewhat like the old hay-wains. There is also a very big and profitable business in supplying Christmas-trees for the American market.

In the fall, the foliage takes on unbelievably beautiful tints of red, orange, yellow, and green in many and varying shades. It must be seen to be believed. So thickly are the rolling hills covered with trees and undergrowth that in summertime it is almost impossible to walk anywhere except on the roads. The woods consist of fir, pine, spruce, birch, maple, and oak, and they are everywhere.

The paved road from Halifax, which goes over several open railway-crossings, runs for about forty miles westward to Chester, alongside creeks and bays and inlets of the sea, so big that the open sea is not visible. Chester is very popular as a summer resort for rich Americans, who have beautiful homes there. They bring their yachts for sailing on the large and very lovely island-studded bay. The beaches of white sand and shallow water are popular for bathing.

From Chester to New Ross is about another twenty-five miles due north, and the road is unpaved, but it has stood up well to the extremely large amount of heavy traffic which has used it during and since the war years. It is hoped that within the near future the paved road will be continued from Chester, through New Ross, and on to the north coast. This would undoubtedly put New Ross right on the map, as it is in the centre of Nova Scotia and is a big potential source of wealth in minerals and lumber.

**I**N this densely-forested country fires have been of frequent occurrence. During the very dry summer of 1949 wide stretches of valuable woodlands succumbed. So closely do the trees grow, however, that no replanting

is needed. They resow themselves rapidly.

Fire-spotting used to be done from watch-towers, and to some extent still is, but the service is now mostly performed by aeroplanes, which each have their allotted districts, over which they fly by day. They are in touch with their bases by wireless, and, when necessary, the news and exact location of a forest-fire is telephoned from the base to the nearest exchange. There is an incredibly quick response. All young men drop what they are doing at the moment and rush to the fire-station in whatever clothes they may be wearing. They jump on passing cars and trucks, coming quickly along the four roads towards the crossroads, called 'Charing X,' and on the fire-engine itself, and in about fifteen minutes from the call all are on their way. Fire-fighters only get twenty cents an hour and their food, and often they have to sleep out rough for several nights. There is a penalty for non-attendance, but the response is universal and nothing can exceed the sense of duty of these fine people on all occasions.

During the progress of a fire, which may last a week or more, local industries suffer on account of shortage of man-power, and the fighters themselves through loss of wages. Luckily the many lakes and rivers serve as a ready-made water-supply for the very efficient and well-equipped fire-engines, all of which carry over a mile of hose. The organisation send a truck to the nearest store daily, and only in the case of a severe fire are tents and a food-wagon, with a cook, sent out. This was done near here the other summer, where there were fifteen fire-engines on the spot from neighbouring counties, each with its long hose. When a fire is surrounded it becomes possible for most of the fire-fighters to leave, but a skeleton staff is left in case of a further outbreak from trees that smoulder inside. It often happens, too, that the burnt ground will continue to smoulder for a long time, to a depth of four feet, and only heavy rain will eventually extinguish this.

All living things flee before these fires, generally to the nearest lake. But the bigger animals, such as moose and deer, find their way back along the sides. The reason for this is because they like to roll in the burnt soil, when cool enough, to rid themselves of parasites. Moose have been decimated, and in some parts almost exterminated, by a very large type of bug which causes them much suffering. There are snakes in the country

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also, but none, it is said, of a poisonous type, and no rattlers.

THE whole countryside teems with game and wild animals, and the lakes with fish. The deer are so abundant that they come right up to the outlying houses in early morning and at dusk to feed in the cleared spaces, especially on the apple-trees, of which there are many growing wild in the woods. When one is driving at night, the deer will cross the road in front of the headlights of the car.

The hunting season begins on 15th October and goes on for about two months for most game which it is permissible to shoot. It is obligatory to wear a red coat when shooting in the forests, but in spite of the large numbers who go out, and may be anywhere in the woods, accidents very seldom occur, most of the hunters having great knowledge of woodlore. Yet some regrettable accidents do happen.

It is against the law to shoot or be in possession of moose, caribou, fisher, marten, or beaver at any time of the year, and this applies also to spruce-partridge and ptarmigan. Two deer, of either sex, per gun may be shot. They must not be taken at night with a light, nor may they be trapped or hunted with dogs. Dogs do not accompany the hunters. Pheasants may be shot in some counties, but not in the county of Lunenburg, where they are very scarce. No limit is put on the number of rabbits or hares, the season for which is 16th November to 15th February. Buffed grouse are limited to five a day, with an

outside limit of fifteen; Hungarian partridges to three a day, with an outside limit of ten. The game laws vary slightly year by year.

Black bears are not uncommon in the woods, and they are sometimes killed with single-barrel shot-guns, firing a bullet. They stand 6 foot to 7 foot, and weigh up to 700 lb. There is no close season, and a bounty of sixteen dollars is offered, this being made up of ten dollars from the government and six from the municipality. The open season for wild geese, duck, woodcock, snipe, and so forth, varies in dates. Trapping begins on 1st November and closes on 15th December for such fur-bearing animals as mink, otter, raccoon, weasels, and the like.

With the exception of rabbits and hares, no mammal or bird defined as game may be offered for sale. Penalties are heavy for infringements, and include forfeiture of guns and rifles, and sometimes imprisonment. The laws are strictly enforced by game-wardens and Mounted Police. There are special rules and seasons for salmon, trout, and fish of all kinds. Salmon are mostly caught by netting; some trolling is done, but very few use rod and fly.

The most lasting impressions gained by one who visits Nova Scotia for any length of time are likely to be the very large families, the great kindness and help given willingly to each other in times of sickness or want, the vast extent of tree-covered hills, the abundance of game and fish, the undoubtedly enormous potential wealth in minerals and lumber, and the extreme beauty of the province as a whole.

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## Swallows

*They cannot be gathering to go, the swallows, not yet!  
For summer is only just wearing her last coronet  
Of oat-ear and poppy and sun.  
They cannot be gathering to leave us . . . not yet!*

*They still haunt the willowy stream with their airs of delight,  
Making summer herself all dismayed at their swift, curving flight.  
All the long, mellow days  
They have worshipped the warmth and the light.*

*Oh, surely they cannot go yet, for summer's still sweet;  
Too early it is for the strange yearning fever to beat  
At their small happy hearts—  
Or have they discovered already there's frost in the wheat?*

MARY E. LOFTUS.



## Desert Bond

ROBIN MAUGHAM

### III

*[I and II—In the fighting in the Western Desert Sir David Holland, Bart., was reported missing and then presumed killed. But three years after the end of the war comes word of him in the form of a promissory note drawn by him, for help received, in favour of Salem Ben Youssef, Sheikh of the Senussi Beduin Hiwari tribe. To satisfy himself about the fate of Holland, Major Dawson, his friend and the teller of the story, sets off to visit the Hiwari, accompanied by a guide, Ali. Dawson is told by the Sheikh that the wounded Holland found shelter with the tribe and that on departing after recovery he left the promissory note; and for himself he discovers that the Sheikh's daughter Mabrouka has a child that is clearly Holland's son. Dawson leaves the encampment, and as he is going Mabrouka throws into his hands a diary of Holland's.]*

THIS is the diary of me, David Holland, Captain. I can't put the name of my regiment, in case the enemy ever get this, though it's unlikely that anyone who can read it will ever get it. Anyhow, if anyone gets it who can read English, will they please send it to Rupert Holland, Fanshawe, Essex. He is my cousin, and the estate will pass to him if I don't get back. I would also like Bill Dawson to read it.

It's now nearly three months since I spoke to anyone who could understand English, and it's odd to be writing down these words when I'm so cut off from anything remotely English. I feel awkward writing about my-

self like this, but there's a very good reason why I must tell my story—quite apart from the fact that I'd like Bill and the others, if they're still alive, to know what happened.

As soon as I left on that patrol on the afternoon of May 28th I had a hunch, as Bill would call it, that something was going to go wrong. For a start, I could see that Bill thought I ought to let one of the younger troop leaders go. But it was an important moment for us to get information, and, like a fool, I rather fancied myself. So I persuaded them to let me go, and then I made a mess of it.

A strong wind from the south was hissing across the desert, blowing up the sand, but the visibility was fairly good, and we soon picked out a formation of German Mark IV tanks moving north-east, which I reported over the air. There was no doubt that Rommel was putting all he had into the battle to get an immediate break-through. I left my other two cars about six hundred yards apart in a position where they could report on the Mark IV's, and went on ahead myself to the west, to see if I could discover anything more. Then, to my horror, I saw a whole squadron of Mark III's coming up from the south-east. They were well fanned out, so I couldn't get back. My only hope was to go on west and make a loop round them. But they spotted me. I was bang in between the two squadrons, and I was pretty sure we'd had it. I told Lucas, my driver, to get flat out, I said a little prayer, and gave Deakin, my wireless-operator-cum-loader, a



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wink to cheer him up. I must record that he was calm and perfectly cheerful and efficient. For a moment I thought we'd get away. Then a shell hit the driver's compartment. Deakin and I jumped out and found Lucas had been killed outright. The Mark III's were approaching. The car was burning. Deakin and I ran for it. As soon as the Mark III's saw us running, the leading tanks opened up with their light machine-guns. We'd still got a chance, because they were over six hundred yards away. Deakin was ahead of me when he fell. I fell down beside him and turned him over. The bullet had gone through his heart. He was dead. As I ran on, I caught sight of a small wadi to my right. I was sobbing for breath. I never thought I'd reach it. Then I felt a searing pain in my left arm and knew I'd been hit. At last I got there and flung myself over the edge and slithered down into the soft sand and lay there, too weak to move, waiting for them to come and take me. But they never came. Perhaps they hadn't time to stop even one tank for the sake of taking one more prisoner. Perhaps they thought they'd hit me when I fell down beside Deakin. At any rate, they never came.

AS soon as I'd got my breath, I scrambled into some camel-grass and concealed myself as best I could. Then I examined my wound. At that moment it didn't look very serious, though it was painful. The bullet had ripped open the top of my forearm. The gash was bleeding, but it was only a surface wound. I bound it up with my field-service dressing.

Somehow I had broken my watch, but I think it was only half-an-hour after I'd reached my wadi that the sand-storm reached its height. The south wind was now sweeping up the sand into a thick cloud which covered the desert like a cloak. I was panting for breath in the sultry heat while I made my plan.

Rommel's attack was moving north and east. We were withdrawing eastward. Therefore if I moved to the north or to the east I would risk running into enemy troops. My only chance was to go south and hope I would be able to skirt round to the east when I had got out of the battle area. Perhaps my choice was wrong. Perhaps it would have been better to make for the coast. Anyhow, once I'd made my decision, I stuck to it.

There was only one snag. Although I'd got a compass, I'd got no food and, far worse, no water. I knew they'd set fire to the armoured car. My only hope was to find a stray tin. One often did find odd tins of food or water in a battle area.

Though the storm was still raging when night came, I decided to begin plodding south. I tied a handkerchief over my mouth and nose and started walking. I hoped to find Deakin's body and the armoured car, but in the thick darkness of sand and night it was impossible. I held my compass in front of me and moved slowly south.

Towards dawn the storm lifted, and the sun shone clearly across the desert. I still forced myself to walk on, hoping to find food or water. Presently I saw something black lying in the sand ahead of me. As I got near I saw it was a jerry-can. I rushed up to it, but it was empty. In the next clump of thick camel-grass I lay down and tried to sleep, but my arm was throbbing and I was terribly thirsty. The sun rose inexorably hotter and hotter. I covered my head and forced myself not to think of water and all cool things—mountains, streams, glaciers, water-meadows, ice clinking in misty glasses. Though I dozed a little, I kept waking to find the sun still beating down on me. At last it began to set.

When it was cooler, I began walking again. I think even then I was so weak and parched that I no longer feared capture. I stumbled through the first hours of that night until I decided to lie down for a short rest—and like a fool I fell asleep.

When I awoke, the sun was already hot. My wound was throbbing horribly, and my thirst was anguish. For a time I lay hopelessly in pain. But I knew that I must move to find water soon, because I was certain that I could not endure the scorching heat of another day. Slowly I got up and began walking forward, step after step, across the burning desert stretching infinitely before me. No longer now did I look round for fear of being spotted by the enemy. Frantically, at every moment, I scanned the horizon for a speck that might reveal a human who could give me water—a human, friend or foe.

My arm was now stiff, and there was a fierce burning pain under my armpit. As the sun rose higher in the sky I began to panic. Wild thoughts shot through my mind. Perhaps I should go north rather than south? Perhaps I was heading for a vast empty space?

I tried to make myself think calmly, but I was sick and dizzy. Then to the west I saw what in the shimmering heat looked like a hut on the horizon. I stumbled towards it. For a moment my fear left me. Then as I approached I saw it was a derelict Crusader tank. There was still a chance it might have water. I reached it, only to find it was completely gutted. I crawled underneath the tank into the shade. Even lying there the sweat was pouring down me. After an hour or so I forced myself to move. It was about four in the afternoon, and my only hope was to spot or be spotted by some human being. I walked on and on until I fell to the ground. I can hardly remember that night because I was already delirious. But I can remember waking up for a while and seeing the cursed sun shining once again, and seeing my arm red and swollen, and I can remember lying down again, because I was now too weak to move, and preparing myself for death.

IT was there, stretched in the sand like a dusty doll, that they found me. I was by then unconscious, but I have vague memories of being carried lying on a litter, and then waking in a tent. During the hours of delirium which followed I can remember only one thing clearly—the face of a girl who seemed to be looking after me. It was a lovely face, and a kind face, and the eyes were dark and beautiful, but there was something wrong with it. Not until the second day did I realise what it was. On her chin and cheeks were faint tattoo-marks. I was revolted, and turned away. The girl must have thought that I was in pain, for she pressed a cold cloth on to my forehead, and when I did not move, and she thought I was asleep, she began softly stroking my hand.

Gradually I realised where I was. Some men from a Beduin tribe had found me and taken me to their tents. I was lying in the Sheikh's tent. The girl was his daughter. Her name was Mabrouka, which means 'blessed.'

I knew then only a few words of kitchen Arabic—I write 'then,' but in fact it was barely three months ago, though it seems three years, and what I have written now in a few lines took me then in my weakness several hours to discover.

My wound had turned septic, and though it was cool in the tent I was sweating badly.

The Beduin had medicine which they said would make me well. I comforted myself by thinking that before the discovery of penicillin not every man died who had a septic wound. For three days I could not move, and all that time it was Mabrouka who nursed me. Often Sheikh Salem, her father, would order her away and sit himself by my side. But soon she would return, and he would leave unwillingly. I sensed that for all his kindness he was afraid. I thought then that he was afraid of the penalty for sheltering me. His tents would have been razed to the ground and his men perhaps hanged or shot. I know now the true reason. He had seen further than either of us. . . .

One morning I told Salem that I felt strong enough to wander round the camp. 'Yes,' he said. 'You are healing now, praise to God.'

It was pleasant to walk about and to greet in the open people such as Salem's young brother Khalil, who had visited me in the tent. Yet I soon tired, and went back to lie down. That evening it was Salem who brought me my food. 'Where is Mabrouka?' I asked without thinking.

'Now you are better it is not fitting that she should be near you,' he replied. 'She is young and unmarried. She has taken her things to the women in another tent. It would be well if you did not meet again.'

'But you don't understand,' I said.

'I do indeed,' he replied, and left.

NOW this is going to be difficult to explain, but I must try for the sake of the future.

At that moment I wasn't in love with Mabrouka. I didn't even want her. Yet I missed her greatly. There had been something soothing in her presence. We had laughed together over little things. And I knew she was fond of me.

One evening, a week later, I had taken a stroll for a short way outside the camp. This was now quite safe to do, for I was wearing Beduin clothes, and there were no troops about. I was wandering back towards sunset when I met her. She was driving home a small flock of goats. I called out to her. For an instant I was afraid she was going to run away, but she turned slowly towards me.

'Mabrouka,' I said. 'I am glad to see you. I wanted to thank you for all your kindness to me.'

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'It was nothing.'

'It was much.'

'No.'

She would not look at me. 'Mabrouka,' I said, 'don't be frightened of me. I'll do nothing to harm you, I promise. But I enjoy being with you and seeing you. Please let us meet when we can.'

'It is impossible,' she said softly.

'Mabrouka, look at me. Do you think I would harm you? Look at me.'

'No,' she cried passionately. 'You are good. I know. But you do not understand.'

'Let us meet here when we can at this hour—if only for a few minutes.'

'Very well,' she said. 'But now leave me, please, leave me.'

AFTER that we managed to meet almost every evening to exchange a few words before returning to the camp by different ways. And slowly I grew stronger. And though I put all thought of possessing her away from my conscious mind I couldn't control my dreams, which began to be filled with the vision of her dark eyes and red lips and slender body.

Then every day I made myself walk further about the camp in order to strengthen my body for the long, difficult journey back to our lines. By now we had heard from other Beduin that the English had been beaten back to Mersa Matruh—some said as far as Alexandria. I tried to get fit quickly, so that I could leave the camp as soon as possible, for it was becoming harder every day to be so close to her, and yet so far. I guessed now that she would yield to me. But I knew that the penalty for her might be death.

I began to walk in the opposite direction so that we should not meet. For three days I did not see her. On the fourth evening I took a far longer walk than usual. I had probably been overstraining myself to get well, for on the way back I felt so weak that I had to lie down. It was at least an hour after sunset when I approached the camp. The night was dark, but I had taken a back-bearing and I could see the little fires twinkling ahead. Suddenly she rushed up to me out of the darkness. 'I thought you were captured. I thought you were killed,' she cried, and flung herself sobbing like a child into my arms.

Then I knew that I loved her, and she loved

me. We were alone together. Nothing else mattered—neither the past nor the future. We were alone, and we loved each other. That was how it began.

WHOEVER reads this, whether it be Rupert or Bill, or any friend of mine, please try to understand that it is for the sake of Mabrouka's future that I have put this down. You will probably be reading this, if it ever reaches you, on a placid lawn in England. You'll think I was mad, or just infatuated for the moment. But it wasn't so. We loved each other—perhaps more intensely because only our hearts and bodies could join: there were too many barriers between our minds. And you must realise that I cared about the danger as much as she—if not more, because she loved blindly. I knew that I must soon leave, for, as the days passed by, my wound was healing and I was getting fit. I tried to live only for the present, but I was tortured by the future and by my unwilling deceit of Salem, whom I had come to like greatly.

I must also ask you as you read this to remember that we were living in the desert. How much lies behind that simple word! It means now to me openness of mind and heart. It means a feeling that one is very close to things our senses are still too blunt to see. And as the days passed by I felt that I was slowly changing. It was as if I'd been short-sighted and could now see to a wider range of vision. I can't explain it better than that. What's more, I felt a great sense of freedom.

Then two things happened. A Beduin arrived at the camp with the news that Rommel had captured Alexandria and was advancing to Cairo. And two days later, to my dismay, Mabrouka confessed to me that she was pregnant. The first meant that there was no need for me to go—or so I tried to persuade myself, for if Rommel was about to overrun all Egypt there was no point in travelling eastward. The second meant that I could not go, for I must now have it out with Salem. I knew only one thing could save Mabrouka.

In spite of Mabrouka's entreaties I tackled Salem that evening. It was the most difficult thing I've ever done. I told him very slowly and gently that I loved his daughter and that she loved me, and I told him that I wanted to marry her. His expression never changed.

'That is impossible,' he said. 'You are not of our people. You are not of our faith. It is completely impossible.'

'Does it matter that I am not of your people?'

'You will soon be leaving us. You will not return.'

'If I am spared, I will return.'

'You could not live with us.'

'I would take her away to live with my people.'

'Perhaps she would not go.'

'Ask her, then.'

'Besides you are not of our faith.'

'I went to our churches in England from habit,' I replied. 'I never believed in all they taught. But I believe that Christ was a great and good man. You believe he was a prophet. I believe there is something greater than we can see, which is in this desert, and in the moon and in the sky, and in our hearts. I call that God. I believe in that God called by whatever name.'

'It is impossible. Leave us as soon as you are strong enough to reach the coast. There you may find a boat which will take you back to your people. And you will forget.'

Then I knew I must tell him. 'There is one reason why I must marry Mabrouka before I leave,' I said slowly.

He looked at me for a moment without moving. Then he stood up so violently that I thought that he would try to kill me. He was still trembling when he spoke. 'We saved your life. This is how you have treated us.'

'I do not ask your forgiveness for me but for Mabrouka,' I said. 'For myself I can only ask this. Let me take her as my wife. When the time comes for me to leave I promise that if I get through alive I will return. But before I leave here I will make a will, which as a soldier I can do, so that if I die Mabrouka and her child will be provided for.'

'What is your money to us? You have betrayed us. You have betrayed our friendship for you.'

'I am willing to do all I can to make amends.'

'There is nothing you can do now but go. There is a man from our family who will take her now as his wife to avoid the shame.'

'No,' I said. 'No. Rather than that I would take her with me through all the dangers. I love her. And she loves me.

You can kill us both, but you will not part us in that way.'

'That is all that can be done,' he was saying when Mabrouka ran into the tent and flung herself weeping at his feet. 'Do that,' she cried, 'and I will kill myself as certainly as I am your daughter. Do you not love me? Do you want to strike my happiness from my hands? I love him. I love him more than life. And if I cannot bear his child and own him as father I will kill myself.'

'Child, child, quiet, be quiet,' he said.

But her sobs grew more violent. Then I saw his hand, in spite of himself, moving to stroke her head, and I knew that we had won.

So I took Mabrouka as my wife. And for the last three weeks I have known greater joy than I thought existed in this world. I've been very happy—even though I have not been able to live completely in the present, for I've not been able to forget that the day would come when I must leave her.

THREE days ago a Beduin who visited our camp told us that Rommel had been halted at El Alamein. The Eighth Army is still fighting. I am now perfectly fit. My wound has healed. I would never forgive myself if I remained here now. Ever since I heard that Rommel's forces had been held I have felt guilty for staying here so long.

Salem's brother Khalil will be my guide for the first stage of the journey. I can never repay these people what I owe them. They have saved my life. They have accepted me first as a friend and, finally, as one of them.

I have nothing I can give them even as a token of my gratefulness. Mabrouka has my signet-ring and my broken wrist-watch. My only other possession is my compass, and that I shall need. With the greatest difficulty I have managed to persuade Salem to accept a promissory note for £20. I would have liked to have made it far more. 'If ever we are in need, we shall use it,' he said.

WHEN I have finished writing this I shall tear out the pages and give them to Mabrouka to hide with her things—in case the camp is ever searched by the enemy.

I can't give details of my journey, but it will be hard, and I know there is a chance I won't get through. I am going in Beduin clothes, so I can claim no protection as a

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soldier. I may be shot. I leave to-morrow.

As I'm writing this, I can hear Mabrouka crying in the other half of the tent. It is terrible to hear her. But, if I stayed, guilt would ruin my happiness and perhaps destroy my love. My conscience is clear. To-night I have made a will providing for Mabrouka, or for my child, should Mabrouka die.

I'm not being morbid when I say that I doubt if I shall get through. I just have a hunch about it—as I did about that patrol. So let's suppose I die and Mabrouka gets the money. Then what? I would like my child to be brought up in England. Even if the war lasts another four years my child will still be young enough to adapt to the new surroundings without much difficulty. But Mabrouka? How strange and frightening she would find England. And yet I hate to think of her parted from her child, in whom, I suppose, she would see me.

I cannot see a solution. But one thing I ask you—you, Rupert, or you, Bill, or any of my friends who are alive. Please do your best for the happiness of them both. Please look after them. Bill would do it better than you, Rupert, because, bless you, Bill is younger and less conventional. He may be able to discover a solution whereby she comes to England sometimes, or the child goes to see her. I'm lucky to have enough money for that to be possible. And yet, even as I write these words, doubt sets in. Why do I want my child to be brought up in England? Because I love England and believe in all that England still has to give to the world. Be-

cause I like to think of my child walking across the lawns of Fanshawe. Because my heart is still in Fanshawe. But those are selfish reasons. Part of me now reasons differently. For all the hardship and squalor of their lives, these people, I'm sure of it, are closer to happiness than we are—perhaps because they are at once closer to real and unreal things. Mightn't it be better to leave the child in this wide freedom? I don't know.

It is late, and I must get up early. I know that my final requests, if I don't get through, should be clear and definite. But still I don't know. So I shall leave the decision to you. Sorry. But there it is. Things may have changed by the time you get this. You may see it clearer than I do. You must decide.

Mabrouka is still crying. There are only a few hours left now. I must go to her and try to make each minute last a year.

I may get through. Perhaps one day I will read these papers in peace, in security. I doubt it. I'm not sorry for myself, but for Mabrouka. She will never be able to understand why I must leave her. I pray that in time she will forget the grief of our parting and remember only our happiness together.

So far as I'm concerned, I reckon I'm lucky. I wasn't brilliant. I was conventional. I'd never have got outside my rut if I hadn't been jolted out of it. I've known much happiness. I've left, so I hope, a part of me—for what that's worth—behind in the world. My conscience is clear. I leave in peace.

DAVID HOLLAND.

(To be concluded.)

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## Grande Dame

*Now earth lies mazed with dreaming, mist-enfolden,  
Her wild heart pulsing to a deeper tune,  
Her mellowed fields more gracious and more golden  
Than ever trembled to the whims of June.*

*Serene at length, with quiet thoughts and human,  
Bringing rich laughter, bringing richer tears,  
Like some wise gentle mother-hearted woman  
Who carries proudly all her weight of years.*

*When leaves tread lightly red and russet dances,  
Oh! who would still to summer's green youth cling,  
Or barter one of autumn's backward glances  
For all the faint reluctance of spring?*

DORIS AMY IBBOTSON.





## The Wood-Pigeon

IAN WOOD

IT is a pity that the wood-pigeon heads the farmers' black-list, for otherwise he is a pleasant and likeable bird, and to some of us, at least, the country would be a poorer place if his dreamy crooning were not to come drifting down from the green leafiness on a day of high summer. Devoted mate and parent, the pigeon is a gentle and kindly bird. That, with his restful colouring and call, makes it understandable that down through the ages his kind has been looked upon by man as a symbol of peace.

The soft, crooning call of the wood-pigeon is one of the most soothing sounds that come to our ears in the country. To appreciate the sound to the full, I think, one should be lying flat on one's back on the sun-warmed turf looking through half-closed eyes at the blue infinity above. In such circumstances the crooning of wood-pigeons from the nearby wood is inclined to complete the closing of the eyes in a short time. There is something in the call of the birds akin to the burbling of a burn. It has been said, incidentally, that pigeons croon only in summer, but I have heard them frequently during severe winter weather.

The only other bird-call that has the same effect on one as that of the wood-pigeon is the quiet, liquid warbling of the nightjar. To listen to the sustained burbling of the nightjar on a warm summer evening is a delightful experience indeed. The two birds have no family connections, but while their calls have certain similarities they have another curious

characteristic in common. At times they both clap their outstretched wings above their backs, making a clearly audible slapping sound as they fly. So far as the pigeon is concerned, it often claps its wings when alarmed, and it may well be that the sound serves as an alarm to the other pigeons in the area, in the same way as an alarmed rabbit thumps the ground with its hindlegs as a broadcast warning of approaching danger.

In the nesting season the wood-pigeon, usually a fast straight-line flier, indulges in climbing and gliding flight-play, as curlews do over the moorland in spring. As the pigeon climbs rapidly he claps his wings, then, on the zenith of his curve, the clapping stops and he glides earthwards on steady pinions, only to repeat the manoeuvre. If in the course of a straight flight the pigeon is suddenly startled by seeing a man below him, he alters his flight-line violently, and often claps his wings while doing so.

On the wing, pigeons are extremely graceful, being streamlined to perfection. Through age-long persecution by man they are very shy and cautious in their movements. I should think that they rank with the wild geese for wariness. But if they can be approached near enough for one to study their colourings, it will be found that those colours are as restful as the birds' crooning. The general colour is a lovely blue-grey, often described as 'pigeon blue.' Actually, however, the neck, shoulders, and breast show shot greens and coppers, while the neck has a pure-

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white splash on each side. Bright eyes and red feet and legs set off the grey.

Wood-pigeons' feathers are very lightly held by the skin and I should imagine that the bird is the easiest of all to pluck. Once I watched a pigeon flying headlong into telephone-wires. Like a bursting shell a great cloud of feathers puffed out into the air, and I expected that the bird would fall to the ground. Instead, it struggled clear of the wires and flew on, looking and flying like a perfectly normal pigeon.

**H**OWEVER much we may admire the wood-pigeon as a bird, there is no denying that it is a voracious feeder and takes vast quantities of grain. Among young plants too, such as turnips, pigeons can do terrible damage, eating the leaves right off. On the other hand, there are occasions when the pigeon hordes turn to eating weed-seeds, such as redshank, and they must do a considerable amount of good in this direction. I have shot many pigeons with their crops packed full of weed-seeds. But I am afraid the odd times the birds are among the weeds are much too few to balance up the case against them.

In the spring the local rabbit-trapper usually becomes pigeon-shooter. When a field is sown and the birds are coming to it he builds a hide against hedge or wall and sets down decoys to allay the suspicions of the pigeons. If a solitary tree grows by the side of the field the shooter generally places his hide within shot of it, for wood-pigeons often land on a tree before flying down to feed.

A pigeon hide is commonly built of fir or spruce branches, and the front of it can be reasonably open so long as the roof is thick. A roof that gives a darkening effect is necessary. To enter or leave, the shooter uses an end, and he keeps a loose branch handy to close the 'door' once he is inside.

He may start with two decoys, and each bird he shoots, up to about six or seven, he sets up with a stick or a wire to keep the head erect. Decoys must be carefully set, or else they will scare off pigeons. Feathers must be smoothed down, no blood must be visible, and decoys must always face into wind. Further, when a pigeon is shot there is always a puff of feathers carried away in the breeze. The cautious shooter picks up these feathers and conceals them, for loose, blowing feathers in a field will turn pigeons away. Often hide-

shooters total up big bags in a day, but although this shooting goes on all over the country in springtime the wood-pigeon population never seems to decrease. The natural wariness of the bird makes anything approaching its extermination almost impossible.

The best time to take incoming birds is as they are about to land and before the wings close. They are more easily killed with wings in the open position. Sometimes I have let a pigeon walk right among the decoys to watch its reactions. Up it comes picking and walking; then it realises the decoys are still. It looks this way and that; then it goes on feeding, but not quite so heartily. Presently it stops walking and has another good look, which as a rule results in a sudden take-off.

An amusing incident happened one day when an old rook came feeding up to the decoys. For quite a time he stood and studied the motionless birds. With head first to one side, and then to the other, he stared and wondered. Next, he went closer and stared again. What finally frightened him I do not know, but all at once with a loud squawk he leapt sideways into the air and flapped away furiously in apparent terror.

**W**OOD-PIGEONS usually drink at a burn or spring, but once I saw one land, with outstretched wings, on the surface of a loch. It appeared to drink while floating in this position, and eventually managed to take off from the water, when it flew away seemingly none the worse. I believe this landing on water behaviour has been seen by quite a number of observers.

Recently, too, I witnessed an uncommon incident which concerned a wood-pigeon. I was fishing a Highland loch and casually watching a pair of lazily wheeling buzzards that were almost overhead. Shortly a wood-pigeon came flying along at a lower level than the buzzards, and one of the big birds stooped at it. The buzzard did not strike the pigeon with its beak, but caught it fairly and squarely in its talons; and thereafter the extraordinary sight of the two pairs of wings flapping one below the other could be seen. In the end the smaller wings faltered and ceased to flap, and soon the buzzard, joined by his mate, glided down to the shore.

Every autumn hosts of Scandinavian pigeons come to our beech and oak woods, and, if the nuts and acorns are plentiful, great

## FLAPPER-RACING IN KERRY

numbers of those migratory birds may be seen. They do not stay anywhere more than a few days, however, always moving on restlessly in search of fresh feeding-grounds. And when the migrants' lightning visit is past the

woods are left once more to our resident wood-pigeon, the bird that, with all his faults, we cannot but like because of the soft crooning calls that delight our ears when summer is over the land.



## Flapper-Racing in Kerry

EDITH C. MURRAY

**K**ERRY, known as 'the Kingdom' to all Kerry men, is a sporting, if impoverished, county, and there every summer a series of flapper-race meetings is held. Men and women, boys and girls, come down from their mountain cottages or in from the villages and small market-towns for miles around to enjoy the sport.

One particular meeting is held early in September about four miles from Cahirciveen. The road leading to it from Caragh Lake crosses the long, brown bog where, so the Kerry men say, on moonlight nights a great black dog, big as a bear, runs swiftly over the bogland, and nobody knows whence it comes or whither it goes. Maybe it is that after fair-days in Killorglin, where the porter runs freely, it is always a moonlight night and the dogs always assume the alarming proportions of big black bears. It could be.

Having crossed the bog, the road leaves behind it the cloud-capped Macgillicuddy's Reeks, winds down the valley towards Dooks, and passes over numerous railway level-crossings. Then after twisting round the heather-covered mountains which drop down into the blue Atlantic rollers of Dingle Bay, it turns inland and becomes completely congested with traffic heading for the races. To the people of the Kingdom there is no highway code. They all drive down the centre of the

road, and, should you want to pass them by, then that's up to yourself. There are donkey-carts and long, red country carts with short shafts sticking out behind to the imminent peril of oncoming radiators; jarvey-cars carrying eight instead of the usual five passengers, and hackney motors filled to overflowing, the doors, unable to shut, being held by the topmost passengers inside; men riding bareback on weedy horses, and small boys jog-trotting along astride the backsides of their donkeys—it is a peculiarity of Kerry boys always to ride balanced just above the donkey's tail—their flapping arms and lusty shouting adding to the general confusion.

Close by the course I ask a youth the way to the car-park. He wears a large red paper rosette in his buttonhole to denote his rank as an official of the meeting. 'Arrah, is it a place to put yer car ye want?' he inquires.

'Yes, the parking-ground.'

'Och, just there where ye are now in the road is the bist place.'

'But I cannot leave her in the road,' I say.

'Pull her well into the ditch an' ye'll be arright, but ye'd better be movin' quick now, ye're afther holdin' up the traffic.' This is obvious by the increase of hooting and shouting all round. As I let in the clutch, the young man jumps on the running-board and shouts helpfully: 'If it's fussy-like ye are about yer

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car, go down the road about half-a-mile or so. If ye leave her here, ye'll have all the people steppin' up on her to watch the races.'

Half-a-mile down the road I find a small boreen, into which I can back the car with comparative safety. As there is still an hour before the first race, I sit for a while in the car to observe the crowd. An outside jaunting-car draws into the lane beside me. When the family have climbed down, the owner, arrayed in his best blue-suit, brown shoes, and tweed cap, starts to unharness the horse, watched by half-a-dozen friends.

'Arrah, Mick, what are ye takin' the horse from under the car for?'

'Sure, an' isn't Mickieen ridin' him in the first race,' replies Mick.

'Begorrah, he'll dhrup dead before he's half-way down to the sea.'

'He will not, thin,' Mick answers. 'Tis a grand turn of speed he have, when he's not dhrawin' meself and Mary-Kate and the children behind him in the car.'

'Well, don't forget to take the blinkers off him. What in the name of God did ye put thim on him for?'

'Faith, an' 'tis that steam-roller engine above in the road by Ballynataggert. He turned right round whin he saw it last week, an' was away home as though the devil himself was in each of his four legs, an' poor Mary-Kate in the car behind him. 'Twas a wonder he didn't have her kilt entirely.'

THE course had been laid out on the only piece of flat country for miles around. It crosses two fields, where the banks have been knocked down, goes away down to the sea, turns right-handed, and comes up across the football field, where, it is pointed out, the goal-posts have been removed, 'in case anyone gets hurt,' and finally finishes up again at the starting-posts. The entrance to the course is a gap in the ditch. An official, complete with red rosette, sits just inside the gap, a white cardboard box on his knee, collecting the half-crown entrance-fee. Truth to tell, very few people pass through the gap; the majority climb over the ditch unconcernedly, as though there were no gap, and no receiver of money. This does not appear to worry the officials one bit. I pay my entrance and ask for a race-card, but am told: 'Oh, we don't have thim things at all, ma'am. Just step down the hill now an' ye'll see the horses

walkin' about all round an' ye can pick out the one ye fancies.'

By this time the side of the hill, which forms a natural grandstand, is crowded with people. Three or four fat old women, wrapped in heavy black cloaks with hoods, in spite of the sun, do a good trade in oranges, red lemonade, and curly sticks of black liquorice. The paddock is a field at the far side of the course. There every imaginable type of horse is being led round by the owner, or the owner's small son. Big horses, small horses, fat, thin, and even scraggy horses, long-tailed and dock-tailed, ponies, cobs—half the horseflesh in the county has been brought along to race. Here and there the eye is caught by a real good-looker, with perfect proportions and the flat let-down hindquarters of a jumper. These horses may well find their way to one of the big racing-stables in Meath, or even to England. It is possible, also, that they have been racing already and because of some peculiarity have dropped back to the flapper meetings. For a stranger it is difficult to find out which horse owns the name on the bookie's board. There are no numbers and no colours, though a few jockeys sport a piece of red or green silk stitched on to their shirt. Most of the jockeys have no riding-breeches and wear grey flannels, held in at the ankles and knees with bicycle-clips or with string, the clips coming in useful again round the elbows of their best Sunday shirts. Their tweed caps are turned back to front while actually racing.

There is a tremendous air of excitement amongst the crowd, much surreptitious whispering, and considerable heavy betting. I stop a lad leading an ungroomed horse, its ears laid back, eyes wildly roving. 'What name?' I inquire.

'Kate's Pet,' answers the boy, winking to me.

I decide Kate's Pet does not look as promising as Caragh's Pride, the jarvey-horse I'd seen in the lane, on which the bookies are now giving four to one. The horses cause a slight disturbance as they walk and sidle through the crowd to the starting-posts. The crowd on the course itself is as dense as ever, and takes no notice of the shouts of 'Clear the course there!' Finally, two stewards fetch a rope about fifteen yards long, and, holding it taut, roughly two feet from the ground, run along the course. This proves a most effective method of moving the crowd.

It is an incongruous field of eight that

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gallop away from the starting-posts, with Kate's Pet lying last and young Mickeen, making vain attempts to hold Caragh's Pride, already well in front. They race off toward the sea and are lost from view for a couple of minutes while rounding the bog before coming up into the football field. The crowd surges uphill on tiptoe with excitement to see them reappear.

'Here they come!'

'Who's leadin' thim?'

'Tis Mickeen on Caragh's Pride first, with Kate's Pet comin' up.'

'Caragh's Pride is fallin' back. 'Tis finished he is.'

'No. He's game enough. He'll do it yet.'

The crowd on all sides presses down to the finish, narrowing the course dangerously, and the shouting grows into a tremendous roar as a hundred yards from the finish both horses are neck and neck, both jockeys using their whips and getting the last ounce out of their rides.

'He's afther doin' it, Kate's Pet is the winner. A grand race entirely.' The owner of Caragh's Pride is hailed by a friend. 'Well, Mick, an' what happened to Caragh's Pride at all that she didn't win?'

'Begob, I dunno,' replies Mick, 'but I'll tell ye this. If that devil of a steam-roller had been down there in that field by the sea Caragh's Pride would have come home a sight quicker, leavin' the rest of thim bate entirely.'

THE next race has a field of ten, and, though it is exciting because of the terrific pace at which it is ridden, there is no undue incident. The third race is won by a girl, the daughter of a local merchant. A grand girl, riding a good horse, she starts firm favourite, having won last month at Ballinskelligs, and she justifies the hopes of her supporters by winning in an easy canter. I congratulate her mother on the fine win and am told: 'Thank you. 'Tis the last race Noreen will ever ride. I couldn't watch. I thought she'd be killed. If it wasn't for the Colonel pourin' brandy down my throat I think I'd have fainted. They tell me she rode a good race. I'd have killed

her if she hadn't, you know. 'Twas a good win, anyway, an' please God she'll win at Waterville again the week after next.'

Tim Sheehan, a small middle-aged man, and a sportsman to his finger-tips, is hot favourite for the next race. Tim's a wonder entirely. He's been riding these last twenty years and won more races than any other man in Kerry. There is the usual excitement at the start, and as the field gallop away a horse-dealer, carrying a large pair of binoculars, gives a running commentary on the race, which he cannot possibly see even with his glasses. Someone in the crowd remarks that those binoculars must be good indeed to see so far, and without hesitation the horse-dealer replies: 'They are so, sir. They are that good I can see the jocks change their minds.'

As was expected, Tim Sheehan wins his race easily enough and is loudly acclaimed. It certainly seems a popular win. Mick remarks: 'What did I tell ye. An' sure if Tim was lyin' dead in the ditch they'd be cheerin' him too, he is that popular.'

The start of the last race is delayed while one of the jockeys brings his excited horse close up to the ropes and takes a cigarette from a friend. This jockey is riding bareback, and because of his cigarette gets away badly. The race is over two laps of the course, and when the horses reappear from the far fields on the first lap the bareback rider is galloping abreast of the leader, but it is obvious something is wrong. Somehow he has got his horse on the wrong side of the rope marking the course. Horse and rider are careering along on the outside, scattering the crowd in all directions as they come. When at last pulled up, the jockey takes one more look at the race, now approaching the finishing-posts, turns, and rides dejectedly away up the hill.

With racing over, the crowd slowly disperse, and at each crossroads the dancing-board is put down. On this board, about eight feet by eight feet, a dozen or more girls and boys will dance the most intricate steps of jig, reel, and hornpipe with perfect ease and timing. Faster and faster, to the accompaniment of an accordion, they will dance till the sun goes down and the quietness of night covers the countryside.





## Two who Stayed

RICHARD BUSH

'COLONEL WALLSON'S daughters?' exclaimed Mrs Laxmi Pant. Then she remembered the spidery signature on the letter. The connection became clear. She leaned forward excitedly, rocking the small, leaking rowboat. 'Not *the* Colonel Wallson?' With her furred silk parasol she pointed across the water at a large castellated building perched on the hillside, surrounded by deodars. 'The Wallson who built that—er—extraordinary mansion? The one who founded the Wallson Memorial Hospital? The Wallson Secondary School? The Wallson Home for Lepers? The man you hill-people still refer to as the "Father of Ramgaon"?'

The old boatman cleared his throat and spat, sullyng the limpid green water of the lake with a horrid blob of spittle. He answered in a clear, shrill voice: 'Yes, lady, the *great* Colonel Wallson. I myself do not remember him. He died when I was a small child. That is his tomb.' He dropped an oar to point with a shaking hand.

Mrs Pant had seen the tomb before—a shining alabaster mausoleum—a miniature Taj Mahal on the lake-shore. She had often shuddered when passing it on the landward side. Now, reflected in the water with its backcloth of willows, it was really quite beautiful.

In truth, the English had been a queer people! This Colonel Wallson, now. Dead these sixty years, and these Himalayan hill-folk still venerated him as 'Father.' All around her,

nestling or perched on the hills about the lake, were the buildings she had mentioned—monuments to his work and charity. Only this morning the Municipal Board of Ramgaon, of which she was Chairman, had debated a motion tabled by Pandit Keshab Dutt to change the names of the school and hospital—to give them Indian names instead. She couldn't help thinking that the Pandit, for once, was wrong. At the thought, she felt vaguely stirred; a shadow crept over the sparkling water, and made her sad.

She shook off the feeling and took the letter once more from her bag. She read it again:

'DEAR DOCTOR PANT,

I am sorry to have to bother you but Khem Singh (our boatman-cum-servant) tells me that you are the only woman doctor in Ramgaon. Previously we used to have dear Dr Joanna Raines of the M.S. Mission, but she, alas! left us two years ago to return home.

My sister Martha has since last night been very ill. She strenuously refuses to see any other than a woman doctor. I am very anxious. Therefore, doctor, I beseech you to come as fast as the means available. Our boat and man are at your disposal.

Gratefully yours, in anticipation,  
MARIA WALLSON.'

MRS PANT, M.B., B.S., put the letter back, and wished she hadn't come. It was

years since she had practised. Dr Ram Dutt would have done just as well. He'd have been glad of the work, especially at this time, when people were still on their way up from the plains. With an impatient flick she retucked her opal-grey silk sari clear of the dirty bilgewater, clutched her parasol firmly in the other hand, and called herself a fool for the third time.

She was far too busy to pander to the whims of two eccentric old English ladies who chose to live on an island in the centre of a Himalayan lake, even though they be the daughters of the famous Colonel Wallson! But what else could she have done? What excuse could she have given? The letter was so pleading, so genuine. Then she smiled to herself. This self-deception would not help. When all was said and done, it was curiosity that had brought her—curiosity to see what lay behind the weeping-willows on the island's shore.

She looked up over the boatman's shoulder at the island ahead of her. It seemed to beckon her, the willows curtsying like Victorian misses in their crinolines. The setting was just right. She turned to the hills, towering above her, encircling the lake. Some, reaching for the morning sun, were gay and welcoming; the deodars on their steep slopes stood tall and straight. Others were scarred with shadow, their twisted rhododendrons and gnarled oaks dark and faintly menacing.

She had been in Ramgaon for nearly a year, but had not realised before that anyone lived on the island. Certainly none of her acquaintances had mentioned it, nor had it cropped up officially. She thought the time had come to put more questions. She leaned precariously in the boat, her sari still held clear of possible damage. 'How old are the two ladies?' she asked.

The boatman did not stop rowing to answer. 'They are *very* old. Maria Miss Sahib (Mrs Pant shuddered at the 'sahib.' *When would these old habits die?*) is older than Martha Miss Sahib. When I was a small boy I used to help my father. He worked for them for many years, and for *their* father, the Colonel Sahib, before them.'

Further questioning was interrupted by the boat bumping on a gravel shore. The house still could not be seen, hidden as it was by a cleverly-planted grove of silver oaks, so placed that they formed both an avenue and a screen.

MRS PANT set off up the path between the oaks, her sari held clear, her high heels twisting on the rough ground, her parasol doing duty as a walking-stick. Khem Singh followed, carrying her bag. Rounding a curve in the snaking path, she saw the house for the first time. She gasped at the eccentricity of it. It was certainly like no other house in Ramgaon. She hesitated for a word to describe it. Ah, yes! Mogul, that was it! Here in the Himalayas! In brick, instead of local stone, its wide verandahs were deep in shadow, their Mogul arches intricately patterned. Wistaria climbed the pillars, the mauve flowers dancing in the light breeze.

She stepped into the verandah. It was dark and cold. She shivered slightly. It was some time before her eyes became sufficiently accustomed to the gloom to see the main-door in front of her. Khem Singh hurried forward to open it. She noticed that it was fully glazed, in small panes of many colours. A similar door opened on to a courtyard on the far side, and through it beams of coloured light streamed on to the plain carpet covering the floor.

Khem Singh showed her to a chaise-longue upholstered in maroon-red velvet. The room abounded in knick-knacks, crowding each other on the mantel and on several small carved rosewood tables. An oil-lamp hung from the centre of the ceiling. The walls showed great patches of damp, from which maroon wallpaper peeled.

Khem Singh, having returned from other regions, where he had presumably announced her presence, fluttered by the door. 'It would have been better if the Wallson ladies had sold this house and gone to live in Ramgaon, would it not?' Mrs Pant said. She was thinking of the lack of electric-light and of the loneliness of this dank old building. Some speculator might have bought it to rebuild as an hotel and to make the island a pleasure resort.

Khem Singh shrugged his thin old shoulders. 'True,' he replied, 'life here is difficult for them. It rapidly becomes worse. Now that there is swaraj, prices are soaring. Kerosene is so tightly rationed it is impossible to manage. I go daily and collect wood from the hills, with which we cook.' He stopped, and threw his arms wide in a gesture which embraced the room, the house, and the whole island. 'After all,' he added with emphasis, '*this* is their home!'

Mrs Pant found herself getting angry. The

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high cost of living due to swaraj! What rubbish these English had been telling their servant. So this was their home, was it? Had not the woman in her letter referred to England as 'home'? 'If they find life difficult, why didn't they go when all the others went?' she snapped. 'To England, I mean,' she added as an afterthought.

To calm herself, she stood up and walked around the room. There was the fusty smell of mildew in the upholstery and the heavy velvet curtains. She saw, too, that the ceiling plaster was peeling. She turned to Khem Singh once more. 'I suppose the Colonel left this house to them? Why did he not leave them the mansion there on the hill instead? It would have been a far more suitable place for two old ladies.'

Khem Singh removed his small black hill-man's cap and scratched his grey head. He looked at her quizzically. He seemed to be choosing his words, his eyes fixed on her face. 'This, you must understand,' he said, 'is where they were born. It was to this place that the Colonel Sahib came for . . . ' he hesitated for a suitable word, 'for recreation, if you follow me. It was to this house he came to rest when he was tired, to recover his health when he was ill. It was a refuge from the world.'

Mrs Pant was not at all sure that she understood exactly what he meant. She turned to look at the pictures on the walls. Hm! Mogul miniatures. Quite valuable. The carved tables, too, were old and good. Her foot touched something in the corner. She stooped to examine it. It was a hookah—an ornamental, brassbound, old hookah, its amber mouthpiece worn and black. Such were now found only in the palaces of the rajahs. What was it doing here?

Khem Singh supplied the answer. 'The Colonel Sahib used to sit on the verandah there,' he explained, pointing through the open door, 'in the mornings after chota-hazri and smoke that hookah.'

Really, this Colonel Wallson must have been an extraordinary man, Mrs Pant reflected. She reseated herself on the chaise-longue. A picture she had not noticed before, on a low table beside her, caught her eye. It was an old photograph, very faded and stained, of a woman in a sari, with two children. The children's faces were very blurred, but that of the woman stood out clearly. There was a caste mark on her forehead and a jewel in her nostril. Obviously a

hill-woman. Probably an ayah to the children. Mrs Pant dismissed the subject from her mind.

She stamped a foot impatiently. If the woman was as ill as the note made out, it was about time that she was taken to see her. Besides, this room was beginning to do something to her. The pictures seemed to be speaking to her. The curtains fluttered, whispering secrets in her ear. She could hear the rustle of flowing skirts. She *must* get out into the fresh air. She jumped to her feet. It was then that she saw the figure at the inner door.

A TINY elf-like grey-haired woman stood in the doorway, dressed in black satin in the European fashion of fifty years ago. Her tiny throat was encased in fine lace stretched with whalebone. Around her neck she wore a jade necklace and at her breast a jade brooch. But it was the eyes that held Mrs Pant. Black eyes. Strange eyes in such a pallid face. Eyes that once had been very beautiful.

When the little woman spoke, Mrs Pant was reminded of the myna in its cage at home. 'Won't you please come in, doctor. I am so sorry to have kept you waiting. I am glad to say that my sister has improved greatly. I feel now that it was an imposition to have brought you all this way.' She held out a hand like a claw as if to help Mrs Pant through the door.

Mrs Pant followed her into a dark hall. The little old lady trotted ahead, talking all the time. 'My sister and I usually keep so well,' she rambled on. 'As my dear father, the Colonel, used to say: "The Wallsons are the doctor's despair; our fees just feed his canaries!" That, of course, was dear Colonel Rush, the Civil Surgeon, to whom he referred. Father always liked his little joke.'

'Was your mother healthy, too?'

Mrs Pant was taken aback at the rude, abrupt answer: 'That, doctor, is beside the point.'

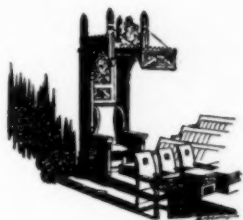
Still puzzling at the little woman's burst of temper, Mrs Pant found herself ushered into a room at the far end of the hall. It was bright in contrast to the darkness elsewhere. The window was curtainless, of coloured glass like the main-doors. To her surprise, there was no bed. The patient lay on a razai on the floor, covered by another of vivid reds and blues. Mrs Pant knelt beside the patient.

## THE SPEAKER'S OFFICE

An old wrinkled face turned to her, and smiled.

Mrs Pant gasped. Like the coloured pieces in a kaleidoscope, the whole suddenly fell into symmetrical shape. This house, its eccentric design, the anomalous hookah, the dark

flashing eyes of the elder Miss Wallson, the murmur of the walls, the whispering of the curtains—every piece fell into place. The strange flamboyant pattern was complete. The face that smiled up at her was brown, like Himalayan honey.



## The Speaker's Office

GEORGE FYFE

WHATEVER else happens when the General Election takes place, one change will be of more than ordinary interest. A new Speaker has to be chosen. Colonel the Rt. Hon. Douglas Clifton Brown, who has occupied the position since 1943, is not seeking re-election. A change of this kind is not a frequent occurrence, because it is a well-established principle that once a Speaker has been appointed the circumstances must be very exceptional indeed if he is not re-elected by each succeeding Parliament, regardless of the party in power.

When a Dissolution takes place the Speaker always remains in office, though with limited powers, until he is re-elected or until a successor is appointed. This is the first business to which the House of Commons gives its attention after a General Election. The explanation is that the new House is not constituted till it has installed its president and till the oath of allegiance has been sworn.

When, as in the present instance, the outgoing Speaker does not seek re-election, the custom is for the new Government, on coming into power, to nominate his successor, although it is usual for his name to be submitted beforehand to the Leader of the Opposition. Contests for the Speakership have been few: it is accepted that the

candidate, whatever his political views may have been, will henceforth abandon them and discharge the duties of his office with complete impartiality.

The Speaker receives an annual salary of £5000, and is entitled to a pension of £4000 a year. In the old days his remuneration was on a very different basis. He was given a fee for each Private Bill that was passed, and for each day that the House sat, in addition to various perquisites, which usually included a paid office under the Crown that involved nominal duties. Eventually an Act was passed under which he received a fixed salary of £6000, with an official residence. This amount was reduced in 1834 to £5000, so that it conformed with the salary that had been fixed for Ministers. The practice of granting on the death of the Speaker a yearly pension of £3000 to his next male heir was abolished.

It is rare for a Speaker to die in harness. The last occasion was in 1943, but before that no Speaker had died in office for a hundred and fifty-four years. On the other hand, many met violent deaths. There was a long period in which the Speaker had constantly to face the possibility of losing his head. To-day, the chief danger seems to be his collapse from overwork.

## CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

The lengthy sittings which are partly responsible for this are, however, no new thing. The longest on record began on Monday, 31st January 1881, and went on for 41½ hours until 9.30 on the Wednesday morning. The Irish Home Rulers, fulfilling their obstructive role, were opposing a Government Bill for the protection of person and property in Ireland. The Speaker was powerless to intervene under the ordinary rules, but finally said that as dignity and authority were seriously threatened he felt they should be vindicated. 'A new and exceptional course,' he said, 'is imperatively demanded, and I am satisfied I shall best carry out the will of the House if I decline to call on any more Members to speak.' The obstructionists protested, but the main question was put and the House was at last able to adjourn.

Up to less than a century ago the strain on the Speaker could be particularly severe because he was not provided with a substitute. If he fell ill there was nothing else to do but close the House until he recovered. This curious state of affairs was allowed to continue until 1853, when it was decided that there should be a deputy.

THE all-important qualification for the Speaker to-day is his impartiality. He is not permitted to take part in the debates. He cannot vote except in case of a tie. It was Arthur Onslow, one of the greatest Speakers in history, who in the middle of the 18th century helped more than anyone to bring about this attitude of strict neutrality. During his record tenure of office, 1728-61, he vigorously condemned the political partisanship that had been for so long a feature of the Speakership. He set an example by refusing the well-paid post of Treasurer to the Navy because he held that the acceptance of a Government office conflicted with the observance of impartiality and might be an incentive to show favour. By his exemplary conduct of the proceedings he succeeded in introducing more dignity and authority than the House had ever known.

It was unfortunate that after his retirement in 1761 there was a gradual relapse into something like the old conditions. The reversion was at one time so pronounced that Speaker Abbot, holder of the office in 1802-16, is remembered only by the almost fanatical partisanship he displayed. Constantly he

joined in the debates to express his political views. But in 1839 another great Speaker arrived, Charles Shaw-Lefevre. In his eighteen years of office he determined to complete the work that Onslow had begun, and by his success achieved the impartiality and discipline that has been the Speaker's characteristic ever since. To-day, the actions of the occupant of the Chair are above reproach and his rulings must be accepted without demur. His supremacy is unchallenged.

The scrupulous observance of custom and tradition, even more than Standing Orders, forms the basis of the Speaker's unique power, and it is interesting to notice how, in many instances, ancient rules have been adapted to changed conditions.

The green carpet that was specially woven for the floor-space between the Government and Opposition benches in the new House of Commons chamber has, near the edge on two sides, a red line to mark the boundary beyond which Members may not advance without being out of order. This is the traditional 'sword-line.' It was introduced as a necessary precaution in the days when many parliamentarians habitually wore swords, and in the heat of debate might have been tempted to draw them if stung by the taunt of a Member on the opposite side. As an additional safeguard it was ordered, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, that no Member must wear a rapier in the House, or boots with spurs. More than one complaint was made about the non-observance of this rule, and Strafford had to issue a special proclamation forbidding the entrance of any Member of either House when wearing a sword.

THE strength of our parliamentary system lies in the wise application of seven centuries of experience, but inevitably this has meant the accumulation of a great mass of precedents with which the Speaker must make himself familiar. As his rulings are final and cannot be questioned, it is obvious that he has to take exceptional care to assure himself of their rightness if he is to maintain the confidence and respect of the House.

His difficulties are added to because very often his decision has to be given on the spur of the moment. The subject of unparliamentary language provides an instance of this. While some heated ejaculation may be re-



cognised at once as within that forbidden category, such as the use of the word 'liar' in disparagement of an Honourable Member, there are other expressions which must always be attended by a certain amount of uncertainty.

In 1884 a course of action that had been pursued by Irish Members was alluded to as 'a dirty trick,' and there were demands for its withdrawal. The Speaker ruled that this was a term which ought not to be used because it was 'both unparliamentary and improper.' Similarly, when Sir Stafford Northcote suggested in debate that there had been ministerial misrepresentation, Gladstone, as Prime Minister, was greatly offended. 'A phrase of that kind,' he said, 'is not usual between persons of his position and mine,' and it was felt that it should be withdrawn. A little later, however, Gladstone was in trouble himself, for he made a reference to Lord Randolph Churchill's 'foul language.' Immediately there were strong protests, and Gladstone had to withdraw the words.

One of the most curious examples of unparliamentary language was in 1887, when some comments by Sir Michael Hicks Beach were greeted by cries of 'Shame.' The Speaker sharply intervened. 'It is quite new of late years,' he said, 'and ought to be put down rigorously. With the authority and sanction of the House I shall in future take notice of it.' To-day, of course, the use of the word is regarded as a more or less ordinary exclamation, but the incident serves to indicate the difficulty of defining unparliamentary language with any exactitude. One Speaker in recent years has been credited with keeping in front of him a list of words regarded as permissible or the reverse.

**E**VEN in the discharge of so constant a duty as selecting which Member is to address the House the Speaker must always be careful to maintain the balance between parties if he is to avoid resentment or a suspicion of partiality. Members anxious to 'catch the Speaker's eye' are apt to labour under a keen sense of injustice if in a crowded House they fail after repeated attempts to

attract the attention of the Chair, and finally lose the opportunity of making a speech.

When Shaw-Lefevre was asked how he found it possible as Speaker to choose a particular Member out of twenty or so who had jumped up at the same moment, he replied as a sportsman: 'I have not been shooting rabbits all my life for nothing. I have learnt to mark the right one.' He was much better qualified than Sir John Trevor, who was Speaker towards the end of the 17th century. Trevor suffered from a squint—as his portrait reveals—and on more than one occasion two Members rose at the same time to make a speech because, although they were in different parts of the House, each was under the impression he had been called upon. Oblivity of vision, however, was not Speaker Trevor's only fault. In 1695 he was the subject of a vote of censure after it was discovered that he had accepted a bribe of a thousand guineas for expediting the passage of a Bill. He stayed away from the proceedings and shut himself in his room to avoid hearing his dismissal from office.

Similar humiliation, though for a different reason, was the fate of Charles Manners-Sutton. He was the son of an Archbishop of Canterbury, and established a record in that he served as Speaker in no fewer than seven Parliaments. For all his skill, he could not avoid showing political prejudice. One expression of it was in the form of a feeble joke. When he called on the Whig Member, Mr Bulteel, to speak, Manners-Sutton made an elaborate pretence of deciphering the Member's name with his glass, and then announcing him as 'Mr Bull Tail.'

Inanities of this kind might have been overlooked, but, unfortunately for himself, Manners-Sutton displayed his partisanship much more seriously on other occasions, and on 19th February 1835 was rejected after having been proposed for re-election for the eighth time. This was the only occasion on which the custom of automatic re-election has not been followed. All Speakers since that time have been distinguished by their unwavering impartiality. It is a principle that has never been observed more conscientiously than to-day.

# Twice-Told Tales

## IX.—'England Expects . . .'

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of September 1851]

WHILE residing in Upper Stamford Street, Blackfriars, London, in 1846-47, the attention of my father was directed to an old and broken-down man who made a scanty livelihood by crying watercresses and red herrings through the street. It was this man's practice to resort to Covent Garden Market every morning in the season at or before sunrise, to purchase his stock of cresses, and then for four weary hours his cracked voice never ceased to sound through the foggy air, except when a suffocating fit of coughing obliged him to pause and cling to the area railings for support.

In the winter of 1846 his cough was so severe that we feared his occupation was gone. I endeavoured to persuade him to take refuge at Guy's, but he would not hear of this, preferring, he said, to die at home. The next spring, however, brought him out again. It was then we discovered that he was an old sailor named John Roome, and that he had served with Nelson at Trafalgar—in fact, that he was then a signal-man on the *Victory*.

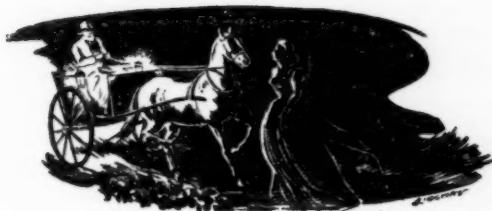
My father having formerly been acquainted with Captain Pasco, who was signal-lieutenant of the *Victory* at Trafalgar, purposed to write to that excellent officer, requesting his interest in favour of Roome; but death came upon my veteran parent while his intention was still unfulfilled, and some months elapsed before I could again direct my attention to the affairs of John Roome. I at length took an opportunity of calling the man in, and then, seating him before me, asked him: 'Who was the signal-officer on board the *Victory* at Trafalgar?' He replied: 'Mr Pasco, sir.' 'Did you serve under him?' 'Yes.' 'Who, then, hoisted the signal, "*England expects every man to do his duty*?"' 'I did.' I had felt prepared for this answer; still, as it was uttered, I could scarcely refrain from a demonstration of reverence towards the old, embarrassed, squalid man who sat uneasily before me.

Upon further inquiry I found that he was sixty-eight years old, and had been a seaman from his youth. He was not more than three or four years altogether in the king's service. After Trafalgar he deserted; and the R. (Run) against his name had disqualified him for a pension. His life had been one of trial and privation ever since.

I inquired of him whether he would like a berth at Greenwich. He replied in the affirmative, but did not appear to pay much attention to the question. It doubtless seemed to him useless. I desired him, however, to bring me all his papers in a day or two, and promised to send copies of them, with an account of his present necessities, to Captain Pasco.

As quickly as the post would allow I received a letter from Captain Pasco, thanking me for the interest I had taken in the cause of 'his old shipmate Roome,' but referring me to the enclosure as evidence that his intercession had been unsuccessful. Roome was again summoned; and as this disheartening news was read to him, the old man's lip quivered, his eyes filled with tears, and his cheek grew ashy white. I then knew how strongly the new hope had fixed itself in his mind. The only course remaining appeared to be, to write to Captain Pasco, thanking him for his humane kindness, and mentioning that Roome had anticipated forgiveness under the government order [indemnifying deserters]. This was done; but before my letter could have reached its destination, I received a note from Captain Pasco, saying, that Roome would be admitted to Greenwich.

And all this came to pass. A short time afterwards I received a visit from a smartly-dressed Greenwich pensioner, who carefully deposited a basket of watercresses in the passage. I found this edition of John Roome to be a wonderful improvement upon the tattered unfortunate of a few months back.



## The Grey Lady of Ben Alder

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J. D. McEWAN

I KNOW that in telling you the story of the Grey Lady I am laying myself open to the mockery of the sceptic. For most, I had nearly said all, psychic manifestations are explicable in simple terms of natural science. But this one is not—at least not so far as I know, and I have told it to several scientists, who have, as is the way with such cautious men, reserved judgment.

It was to my mother that the thing happened, and it was she who told me of it. I can still see that fey look in her eyes which, as a boy, I thought so unusual, as she was not introspective or meditative by nature. She herself offered no explanation; possibly she did not know of any, and I also shall not endeavour to piece together any theory to explain the facts. I can only swear that the veracity of her story cannot be impugned. My own belief, as a man who feels that reasoning is singularly unproductive in these things, is that it is better not to inquire too deeply, for I remember reading somewhere in my Bible that a witch of Endor duped a very wise and great man, though I cannot remember the details very clearly. I do not think my mother was afraid; or if so, it was merely that she had been involved in happenings that were not for her. She suggested that at the time she was near almost to touching something that was very evil. But what impressed me was the clarity of detail with which she seemed to

remember the things she spoke of; and I, vicariously, seemed to see them, too. She spoke simply, as mothers do, and as I am not much of a hand with a pen myself, having spent the best part of forty years working with a chisel on Aberdeen granite, I shall do well to record the events much as my mother told them to me.

MY mother was a town girl, born in the Goldenacre district of Edinburgh, but she came of Highland stock. Her father had come south with a small bursary, and very great ambition, to the University of Edinburgh, in which city he had later gone in for law. He hailed from Loch Erichside, where his people had lived for generations, and where his father was employed as coachman at Ben Alder Lodge. My mother spent every summer as a girl at the coachman's house, travelling to Dalwhinnie by train, with her head at the window from Dalnaspidal down the Spey valley, eager to catch sight of the waving hand of her grandfather, clutching his top-hat, as he stood at the station with the gig that was to take her to the Lodge.

The months spent in the north seemed to her, looking back later, a time of enchantment. The blaeberries! She remembered how they spread like a purple plaid round the rugged shoulder of the Ben, extending even as far as

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the cave where Prince Charlie was reputed to have hidden for a time after the Forty-Five, though that was too far for her to visit. Then beneath, there were the trees, and God has given to man no sweeter thing than the smell of the resin of pine-trees, unless it be the souging that the wind makes in their branches, especially in autumn, when it has not become too boisterous as it does in winter.

The centre of interest and activity, however, was the Loch, for the spirit of all lochs is a wayward and capricious thing. My mother, being strong of arm and fearless, soon learned to row, and she went on long excursions by boat; but when she went to Macrae's cottage up towards the Rannoch end of the Loch, as she did once a week with provisions for the stalker, she was always accompanied by her grandfather, or, if the weather was rough, by Hector, the second gardener. But the weather was seldom rough in these late summers—or at least she did not remember much about stormy days. The things that lingered in her memory, like lavender seeds, still faintly aromatic, in a Victorian bureau, were the blaeberries on the hill, the pine-trees, the glistening waters, and the sun, gentle as a benediction, over everything.

Now, behind Ben Alder Lodge, stretching up to the pine-forest, was a garden. It was not a big garden as gardens go, being possibly about half-an-acre in extent. It was roughly square. From each end of the Lodge high wire fences for the deer ran up to the tree-line; and between the trees and the garden there was a lesser fence, for the density of the undergrowth there made it unlikely that any creature, man or animal, would succeed in effecting an entry. In the middle of this fence there was a gate leading into the forest, but no one knew what purpose it served, for no path led upwards from it, and it was always strongly secured by a heavy padlock. From the gate the main path led down to the Lodge.

A garden calls insistently, of course, to one who loves it, especially when it has pine-trees behind it, as this one had, and this garden was the retreat of my mother on Sunday afternoons when her grandfather and the other members of the family retired to the uncomfortable red-plush chairs of the parlour. She sometimes took a book with her or some knitting, and, desultorily, she worked a little. But the warmth was always irresistible. The iridescence of the sun on the Loch caught even

the most industrious eye, or a robin would interpose his chirpy companionship. On occasion she would fall asleep on the garden-seat and only awake with the chill air blowing up from the Loch after the sun had set.

ONE Sunday my mother was thus startled when light was already dim. She felt chill. Then slowly there came to her a consciousness that she was not alone. Some other thing was near. She felt a numbing sensation of threatening hostility, of malignity, as if her presence were resented. She heard nothing. She could at first see nothing, but, as she turned round and gazed towards the wood, she became aware of someone at the gate—at first the face of a lady, apparently deathly white and furtive-looking. She was dressed in grey, a steel-grey of an unusual transparency, a colour which my mother never forgot. When my mother first saw the lady she was engaged in undoing the hasp. She then came through the gate, shut it, and walked down the gravel-path towards the house, passing within a few feet of the place where my mother sat. She gazed from side to side as she walked, stealthily, as if pursued, and finally disappeared into the darkness behind the stables. But the strange thing was that though she appeared to unlock, and then fasten, the rusty padlock of the gate, and though she was walking on rough gravel, she made no noise, no sound whatever. Apprehensive, my mother walked up the path and, examining the gate, found it securely locked. She then hastily returned to the house, where she recounted her experiences.

Her grandmother was palpably startled by the girl's account of this grey presence. In an effort to discover some natural explanation of the events she made minute inquiries, which my mother answered clearly, having imprinted in her mind every detail of the occurrence. Meanwhile her grandfather, ensconced behind a book in the big chair at the hearth-corner, affected not to hear what was being said, while the startled eagerness of his look betrayed, had one studied his features closely, at least partial comprehension, and very considerable alarm. At length he laid down his book with a specious air of worldly scepticism: 'It's nothing. You must have been dreaming, girl,' he said; and then added as an unnatural pleasantry: 'Reading fairytales, I shouldn't wonder, and seeing visions?

## THE GREY LADY OF BEN ALDER

Have nothing to do with grey ladies. No good comes of them. Be off with you!" And so, her bewilderment undisputed, my mother betook herself to the kindly comfort of her bed, though her sleep was troubled.

**B**EFORE my mother returned to Edinburgh she used to go to Dalwhinnie to complete arrangements for despatching her box and purchasing her ticket. On these occasions, the distance being too long to walk, she drove in the gig. Sometimes the business was soon completed. Thereafter her grandfather would adjourn to the hotel for the local news, and for what he called a 'refresh.' My mother was then free. She explored the few shops at Dalwhinnie, made her few purchases of sweets or presents for her brothers and sisters in Edinburgh, and when the day was still early would walk off in the direction of the Lodge, to be overtaken later by the gig.

The Saturday after the strange visitation in the garden she had gone to Dalwhinnie in the gig. The afternoon was bright, and made her think of the golden afternoons she had read about in fairy-tales but had not quite understood then. She set off for the Lodge with a firm step, anxious to surprise her grandfather by the distance she had covered. Shortly the sun vanished, snuffed by Ben Alder, and dusk came, and then, with a suddenness strange in that northern summer twilight, darkness fell. She was now beside the Loch, where the road follows tortuously the precipitous banks. The firs were above her. Some gnarled and stunted elders grew by the water's edge, obscuring the Loch. Still her grandfather did not come. Had something happened to him, she wondered. He was not usually so late. Occasionally she rested, as her feet were sore, but she was soon on the road again, for strange sounds of life filled the empty silence of the night—rustlings in the grass or in the branches, squawkings and chattering from the hillside, eerie sounds.

At length through the darkness came the sound of hooves—at first distant, but then nearer and clearer. My mother stopped to wait, eager to catch sight of the shafts of light from the candles of the coach-lamps. The sound was unmistakable, but the coach was long in coming. At last she saw it. A tremor in the darkness, and then a yellow gleam round the corner, and along the roadside. It was the gig.

My mother afterwards was not quite sure precisely at what moment she became aware of it, but first there was a faint sensation, then a conviction of impending malignity, as she had experienced in the garden on the preceding Sunday. It was just when she had become certain of this that a strange thing happened. The right-hand lamp of the gig—that is, the one nearest the hillside—was extinguished. My mother peered into the half-light incredulously. Something seemed to cross the road hastily and silently, and very close to her. In a moment the light reappeared, and almost simultaneously the left light was blotted out. Presently it, too, shone as before. And then my mother saw clearly. It was a figure, the figure of a lady dressed in grey. The figure stopped by the roadside full in the gleam of the lamp as the gig approached, then gazed for a moment with such appealing and forlorn eyes that my mother's heart filled with compassion. In another moment the figure was over the bank and lost in the darkness of the lochside.

**S**OON the gig came to rest by the roadside and my mother clambered up beside her grandfather on the seat. The grey presence on the road, those appealing eyes, the cold, icy certainty of malevolence loosed her tongue in an immediate torrent of interrogation. Had her grandfather seen the grey lady? Where could the lady go to among the elders by the water's edge? Had her grandfather felt anything odious or abhorrent? Could the pony have seen her? Her grandfather did not care to answer. Wrapped up in his driving-coat, his top-hat pulled low and rakishly over his eyes, his hands tightly gripping the reins, he looked straight before him, watching the dark and twisting road lest the pony should stumble.

They soon left the trees behind, coming out on the open hillside, and all at once, rounding the ridge of the mountain, they saw the clouds draw apart, and the moon, lovely as a young girl going to her first communion, swept out into the blue path of the heavens. The beams fell full on the night hillside, and on the old man and the young girl riding high on the gig seat. The man's hands looked white as they clutched the black reins, so white that my mother, stretching out her arm, touched them, and found them icy cold. It was then that, turning round, she looked straight into her



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grandfather's face, lit by the weird brilliance of the moon, and realised in an instant paroxysm of horror that it was the face of a dead man. The eyes were sightless, fixed coldly in their sockets, and the face seemed unnaturally pale, like wax in the moonlight, save where on the left cheek appeared a dark spot. My mother, lifting the hat slightly, so that the moon fell full on the wan countenance, saw the dark spot grow to the likeness of a key—not a key that she had seen often, except for church or mausoleum doors, with the handle fashioned into the shape of a cross; only, this key was much smaller. But the peculiar colour of the imprint riveted her gaze like a basilisk. She had seen that colour only twice before. It was a grey of a strange and luminous transparency.

The gig with the dazed girl and the unhappy load were soon at the Lodge. My mother told her story haltingly. Help was quickly summoned, and her grandfather was carried to his chair in the parlour. It was obvious that he was beyond human ministrations, but hope is not easily quenched in a Highland breast, especially if that breast is a woman's. Recovering from the blank realisation of her tragedy, my mother's grandmother, remembering that poison sometimes stimulates the heart to action, sent my mother to her grandfather's medicine cabinet in his bedroom. The key was on the pipe-rack beside his wardrobe. Hastily and nervously my mother, groping in the dark, found it, struggled for the lock without success, and then, returning to the parlour, said that the cabinet would not open. She must have got the wrong key, and, so saying, she threw the one she held in her hand on to the table, when the light of the lamp, falling directly on it, brown with rust against the green baize, revealed for the first time its shape, and my mother saw that its handle was fashioned in the shape of a cross.

THE sad news soon spread to the servants' quarters of the Lodge; and those who had shown no interest in my mother's grandfather in life hastened to satisfy their curiosity by gazing upon his face in death. That desirable blessing of privacy when face to face with the ultimate sorrow was denied my mother and the other members of her family. Coachmen and gillies, clumsily and earnestly helpful, filled the small parlour, their rough and now haggard faces somehow chiselled to a nobler

mould by the yellow rays of the lamp. Some wondered if a doctor had been summoned from Dalwhinnie: others uneasily remembered incidents of the dead man's life, recalling, as is the way with those near the soil, with infallible and instinctive felicity those acts and thoughts which possibly the dead man would himself have most liked to be remembered.

It was then that the old gardener, with the distinguishing awkwardness of sorrow, approached my mother where she stood, heavy-hearted but without tears, beside the table. Picking up the key he examined it, turning it in his hand, and asked her where she had found it. Had it been taken from the dead man's pocket? He knew it, of course. He had used it when, fifty-six years before, he had come as a boy to Dalwhinnie, but he had not seen it since. It was the key for the padlock of the gate that led from the garden into the pine-wood.

On the third day the men of Erichside, strangely unfamiliar and ill at ease in black coats and top-hats, came to Ben Alder Lodge to accompany their friend on his last journey along the familiar Dalwhinnie road. Reverently they stood beside the newly-dug red earth, listening with instinctive understanding to the sonorous cadences of the burial service. 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' repeated the preacher, and his words floated across the stillness of the valley to the hills, just as the spirit of their friend had gone out to cross the vast stillnesses where God must abide. And then, farewell silently taken, they went their ways.

My mother remained with her grandmother in the Lodge and looked down the road watching the procession, but thinking not so much of it as of the moon shining in her grandfather's white face, and of the horrible greyness of the key on his cheek. Five days later she left the north for Edinburgh, and never returned.

WHEN I grew up I visited Loch Erichside. I remember how, in the kindly sun on the hillside, I seemed to touch hands for a moment across the years with the young girl who was my mother. I remember the purple dye on my fingers from the blaeberries, and the long ribbon of the Loch, viewed from the crags of Ben Alder which I climbed. I spent a full afternoon up there trying to re-create my mother's life in these parts years before,

## NEW METALS FOR INDUSTRY

and, despite the distance in time, the main details were still clear enough.

In the evening I called at the coachman's lodge, but the southern voices there persuaded me that inquiry would be fruitless. This was another generation, and these were strangers. My mother's grandmother had long since been laid beside her husband in Dalwhinnie churchyard, and the rest of the family had migrated.

Later in the evening I sat at the fire in the inn at Dalwhinnie, feeling a stranger and intruder, till, approaching an old and venerable man who had come in from the hills on some errand, I learned with excitement that he remembered my mother. At first he had been uncertain, but several particulars had confirmed her identity beyond doubt. He told me many things about the Lodge and the village, mostly about the people amongst whom my mother had spent her holidays. But on one point my cautious inquiries were met with consistent evasion. He had heard stories about the Grey Lady; he was sceptical about them; he had never seen her. Beyond

that, Highland caution would not go, and my inquiries ended there. I knew when I was beaten.

Next morning I packed my case and stepped into the south-bound train. The heavy chug-chug of the engine up the winding incline seemed to mark my emergence from a strange distant world of unreality, of unnatural happenings in that Highland valley, to the other southern world of material things where I was at home. Nearing Dalnaspidal, I looked from the carriage window away down across Loch Erich to Ben Alder, stark and angular, and to Carn Dearg, the Red Mountain, beyond. I could see the dark-green immensity of Ben Alder Forest, even where the trees came down to the water's edge where the Lodge was, though the Lodge itself I could not see. Presently the hoarse grunting of the engine rose to a high-pitched snort. We were over the summit. I opened the window and looked out, eager to catch a last glimpse of the Loch. But I was too late; it had already vanished behind the shoulder of the hills.



## New Metals for Industry

A. G. THOMSON

**P**ROGRESS in metallurgical and physical research is constantly opening up fresh fields for engineering manufacture by the development of metals and alloys with new or improved properties.

During the late war magnesium came into its own as an engineering material of major importance. To-day Britain has magnesium foundries which are acknowledged leaders in the production of high-quality castings from this material. Magnesium alloys have the highest ratio of strength to weight of any cast

material, a property which renders them particularly valuable to the aircraft industry. Large tonnages of sand castings and of gravity and pressure die-castings were supplied to aircraft manufacturers during the war and proved extremely reliable in service.

Since the war, commercial consumption of magnesium has steadily increased and many promising applications have been developed. Remarkable performances in both cast and wrought form are claimed for the magnesium-zinc-zirconium alloys which have recently

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been introduced. It is expected that the greatly improved workability of these new alloys will materially reduce the high cost of fabrication, which has hitherto limited the use of magnesium alloys in wrought form. Magnesium-zinc-zirconium casting alloys with additions of rare earth metals have proved extremely useful at elevated temperatures.

Most processing problems have now been solved, while the successful development of processes for the extraction of magnesia from sea-water, together with improved methods for the production of magnesium metal of commercial purity, have enabled this relatively new material to be supplied at such economical prices that it can compete with aluminium in certain fields.

For a number of years British and American scientists have been investigating the properties of magnesium-lithium-base alloys, which have interesting possibilities as future materials for the engineer. Metallurgists have succeeded in producing alloys with densities still lower than those of the existing magnesium-base alloys and yield-strengths comparing favourably with those of the strongest available commercial aluminium-base alloys. On the other hand, corrosion-resistance of most magnesium-lithium-base alloys is poor, and this is one of the problems with which future research is likely to be concerned.

**B**OTH in Britain and the United States considerable interest is being taken in the prospects which seem to be indicated for titanium as an important engineering metal.

Titanium has been known for more than a hundred and fifty years and is extensively used in modern industry, but its development as a structural material has hitherto been hampered by the scarcity and high cost of the pure metal. By far the largest proportion of the titanium used in industry is consumed in the form of purified titanium oxide for use as pigments. Noteworthy developments in the metallurgical applications of titanium have also taken place. Titanium is a good deoxidiser for steel and non-ferrous alloys, acts as a nitrogen trap in Bessemer steel, improves the properties of stainless steels, and has other valuable uses in steel production. Titanium nitride and titanium silicide are among the hardest synthetic compounds known to man. All these applications are already well established and other important uses have been developed.

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Pure titanium is a light metal, which can be processed to yield properties comparable with those of medium-strength steels, while its properties of corrosion-resistance are similar to those of austenitic stainless steel.

Until about 1900, efforts to produce the pure metal were unsuccessful, but during the past half-century a number of methods have been evolved. Since 1948 ductile titanium has been produced commercially by E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. The initial production was 100 lb. a day, but this has been increased, and a further expansion of output was scheduled to take place last year. Further developments in manufacture or distribution have recently been reported from the United States, including the production of 1000 lb. ingots of the metal. Once it is produced in sufficient quantities, titanium is expected to become competitive with both magnesium and aluminium.

In the aircraft industry titanium may be used as a substitute for light alloys and stainless steel in a large number of components, such as fuselage, propellers, bearings, aials, etc., while tests are being conducted in the possible use of this metal or its alloys for jet-engines and gas-turbines. In ship construction titanium, it is thought, will be suitable for any metallic components which have to withstand sea-water or salt air. Because of its high strength-weight ratio, titanium may make possible the more extensive use of air transportation for military equipment, for which reason alone it seems destined to become a material of the highest strategic importance. A very wide range of industrial applications is also envisaged.

The study of alloys based on titanium is still very young, but the progress so far achieved suggests the possibility that research may result in the development of alloys which are far superior to the pure metal.

Both the principal titanium minerals, ilmenite and rutile, are present in the black sands of streams and beaches in many parts of the world, and in some of these deposits a very high degree of natural concentration has occurred. These highly concentrated deposits are easily and economically worked, so that adequate supplies should be available to permit the extensive use of titanium and its alloys for engineering purposes.

**A**T the 1950 Physical Society's Exhibition of Scientific Instruments and Apparatus

## NEW METALS FOR INDUSTRY

the General Electric Company Ltd showed crystal triodes constructed in germanium and also an apparatus in which germanium was used for the measurement of magnetic field. These exhibits are the fruits of scientific achievement which has made two new metals available for British industry.

Though both germanium and gallium are of fairly widespread occurrence, they are seldom found in quantities large enough to permit of extraction on a commercial scale. In the United States there is a limited output of germanium from the residues of zinc ores, and production from this source is believed to be capable of yielding from 1000 to 2000 lb. a year. In Britain the extraction of both gallium and germanium from flue-dust is now being undertaken, and limited quantities of germanium are available for industrial use.

This development has been pioneered by the Chemical Research Laboratory of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, whose investigations into the possible extraction of gallium and germanium from flue-dust were started shortly before the war. Following a report that germanium had been discovered in British coal, the investigators studied the composition of coal-ash, but found that the germanium-content was relatively small, due to the fact that during combustion much of the germanium present in the coal is carried up the chimney with the combustible matter. They therefore considered the possibility that improved recoveries might be obtained from the dusts deposited inside high chimneys. Samples were accordingly taken from the flues at various gasworks. It was found that the producer systems of gasworks yielded about  $\frac{3}{4}$  per cent of germanium and a similar amount of gallium, the flue-dusts from both sources being appreciably richer in both metals than are the American zinc residues.

The method of recovery developed by the Chemical Research Laboratory is based on the distillation of flue-dust with hydrochloric acid to form germanium chloride, which boils at 83 degrees C. and is distilled off. The gallium remains behind in the acid residue, from which it is extracted with ether as gallium trichloride. Recently the Chemical Research Laboratory has developed a new process for the recovery of gallium from flue-dusts by fusion with caustic soda.

The physical properties of both germanium and gallium have been studied by the National Physical Laboratory.

Germanium, a relatively hard metal with a density of about 5.4, is of particular interest to electrical-equipment and radio manufacturers. Important uses for this material have been developed on the cat's whisker principle. In radar and similar applications germanium crystals are employed for the rectification of micro-waves. The substitution of a small crystal of germanium for the normal glass valve should enable the size of radio receivers to be considerably reduced.

So little gallium has hitherto been available for industry that its commercial applications are virtually non-existent. One of its outstanding characteristics is a melting-point of only 29.75 degrees C., which is so low that the metal actually melts when held in the hand. This very low melting-point, coupled with a boiling-point of over 2000 degrees F., seems to render gallium eminently suitable for use in thermometers. The only other metal suitable for thermometry is mercury, which has a boiling-point of only 400 degrees C. Theoretically, gallium should make possible the production of thermometers for use at a very much greater range of temperatures, providing that an envelope capable of standing up to extreme temperatures can be developed. Fused quartz has been used for the purpose.

Due to its property of reflecting a large proportion of blue light, gallium has also been used to some extent for coating mirrors and, as well, as a substitute for mercury in ultra-violet lamps. One limitation to its potential usefulness is the necessity of keeping the metal from solidifying, since it expands on cooling and is liable to burst the vessel in which it is contained.

Because of the small quantities at present available, both gallium and germanium are expensive, but prices can be expected to come down as new applications are developed, since increased production should have favourable effects on costs. Present indications are that the output of both metals will necessarily be limited, as the aggregate tonnage of flue-dust available for treatment is unlikely to exceed a few hundred tons annually. It seems possible, however, that, should the demand become sufficiently great, both metals might be recovered from almost any works in Britain where coal is burnt at a sufficiently large rate.

**A** RECENT development with potentialities which are regarded as extremely

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great is the production of spheroidal-graphite cast-iron. This process involves the treatment of grey iron by the introduction of magnesium to produce castings containing graphite in spheroidal form. As cast, the product is characterised by high strength and, in suitable compositions, by appreciable ductility. Short-term treatment at moderate temperatures greatly increases ductility and gives tensile properties at least equal to those of the best qualities of conventional malleable iron. Quenching and tempering treatments enable the final properties to be varied over a very wide range.

The field of application for these ductile cast-irons is very wide and will probably include many types of castings at present made in malleable cast-iron or in carbon steel.

Other uses will assuredly be developed as engineers become familiar with the properties obtainable and when the results of service tests are known. Considerable interest is being taken in this new development, which has already passed from the experimental stage into commercial production. The process is being fully covered by patents in all industrially important countries.

Parallel with the developments which have been mentioned, progress is constantly taking place in the production of new or improved alloys of all the established engineering materials, such as steels, aluminium, copper-base and zinc-base alloys, etc. Thus metallurgical research continues to play a leading part in the development of every branch of metal manufacture.

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### A.D. 409

*The eagle glitters in the quinquere  
By oar on galleyed oar swept on to Gaul;  
Receding Britain fades into a dream—  
In all but memory beyond recall,  
Yet still too near in Time to stir regret  
In minds where distant-Past and Future blend.  
The homing legionaries' thoughts are set  
On love, and Lalage, and journey's end.*

*Yet one man strains his eyes to take their leave  
Of white cliffs guarding treasures dear and sweet,  
Which all the might of Cæsar cannot reave,  
To vaunt in triumph through a Roman street—*

*Chalk downs and cowslips; hawthorn buds that bring  
The stars to shine where dusty chariots pass;  
Leaf-gold in autumn, bluebell woods in spring;  
The south wind singing through the meadow-grass;  
Oak, elm, and ash shoots growing strong and tall;  
Hill-curves and gentle valleys, bracken-bright;  
Bee-haunted heather underneath the Wall;  
Quicksilver streams that face the moors with light—*

*And though the green verge of the Appian Way  
And olive-burdened banks where Tiber flows  
Irrevocably hold him in their sway,  
He turns towards them grieving, for he knows  
That Thames will never shine again for him,  
Nor ever Watling Street be primrose-lined.*

*And in that lost, loved island, far and dim,  
One man leaves something of his heart behind.*

D. A. WILKINSON.





## The Leave-Boat

JAIMEN

TWO young subalterns were wandering along the landing-stage at Boulogne in somewhat sheepish fashion in the early spring of 1917. As they passed the R.T.O.'s office their pace automatically quickened, for, truth to tell, they had no business there at all. Earlier that morning they had boarded a civilian train at St Omer at the back of the Ypres salient, and had arrived at Boulogne a day in advance of that on which their leave for Blighty was due to start.

They had had a long, dreary spell in the trenches, particularly during that winter, which had been one of the coldest for fifty years in Belgium and Northern France. Now they were spruced out in their best khaki drill and Sam Browne belts, and everything they saw was a sheer delight to their eyes after the bitter monotony of life in the salient, with its endless duckboards and serried mass of shell-holes, as often as not filled with stinking garbage and the odour of dead and decaying filth. They filled their lungs with the strange, sweet smell of the sea and thought pleasantly of beds with real linen sheets, of girls, of food, of all the gay things of life which once had been their everyday lot.

'There's a leave-boat,' exclaimed Comerforth. 'Come on, let's find out what time she sails.'

'But our passes are marked for to-morrow,' replied Kelly, who was more cautious and discipline-minded. 'The R.T.O. may spot us and fire us back to our battalions.'

'Not he,' retorted Comerforth, 'especially when we show him our leave-passes.'

A queue had formed up to the gangway, so the two casually joined it, expecting every minute to be hauled out ignominiously and ordered off. They were intrigued to find that the majority of the would-be passengers were brass-hats and staff officers of all ranks, with a sprinkling of batmen and officers' servants.

'These staff blighters get far more leave than we troops,' whispered Comerforth.

'Aye, it would appear so,' agreed Kelly. 'I'd shove them all into the line and give them a taste of real war if I had my way.'

By and by the R.T.O. came down the queue. 'You two officers, report at the gangway for duty,' he barked.

Kelly and Comerforth fell out of the ranks. Kelly just looked at Comerforth accusingly, and they proceeded along disconsolately to where the ship was tied up. The funnels were belching forth great columns of smoke, preparatory to the ship's setting sail.

'Your names, please,' said the R.T.O., joining them, notebook in hand.

'Second - Lieutenant Comerforth, Royal Irish Rifles, 36th Division.'

'Second - Lieutenant Kelly, Royal Irish Fusiliers, 36th Division.'

'Mr Comerforth, you will be adjutant of the ship, and Mr Kelly will be your assistant. Your duties are to see that every passenger wears a lifebelt irrespective of his rank or station. Proceed on board, gentlemen.'

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They could hardly believe their ears, but, with an air of finality, the R.T.O. signalled to the military policeman to allow them to pass up the gangway, and, hey presto!, they were en route to Folkestone the day before their leave should have started. When you got but ten days' leave in all, one extra day was indeed a godsend.

AS the ship steamed out of harbour, two destroyers took up position, one off the starboard bow, the other to port, and the vessel proceeded in state out to sea.

Most of the passengers had obeyed instructions and wore their lifebelts, but as the two young officers went their rounds they were obliged to be firm with one irate, crusty old general, who waved them brusquely aside and gave them to understand he was taking no orders from two cheeky young subalterns.

Kelly would have ignored the incident and passed on, but Comerforth stood unyieldingly at attention. 'Those are my orders, sir,' he stated, steadfastly resolved that the old buffer was going to obey orders for once in his life.

The brass-hat was inwardly fuming, but gave in at last with an ill grace. A middle-aged major, wearing the tabs of the 16th Irish Division, was tremendously tickled with the whole performance, and, when the two subalterns were out of sight and hearing of the bigwig, he came over to Comerforth and shook him warmly by the hand. 'Bravo, the Ulster Division,' he chuckled. 'Tell me now, do you know who he is?'

'Haven't a notion, sir,' answered Comerforth.

'The Commander of the Nth Corps. Man, you've put him into a towering rage. The idea of you two young subalterns standing up to that fiery old cock-sparrow! Wait till I tell the boys at Westminster about this. By the way, what are you two fellows doing on board, anyway? Aides-de-camp?'

'No, sir, we're going home on ten days' leave.'

'But this isn't the leave-boat, my lads. We're being convoyed over to a secret session of Parliament, and all the generals and bigwigs

are reporting for special orders to the War Office!'

'Glory be!' exclaimed Comerforth, the wind completely knocked out of his sails, while Kelly would almost have disappeared into the hold if there had been a gangway handy.

The major literally bubbled over with repressed glee. He shepherded the subalterns into the saloon, and after a hearty meal the three had just time for a round of drinks before they berthed at Folkestone.

When they arrived in London, the major insisted that the two young Ulstermen should be his guests, and the last they saw of him was his smiling face as the Irish Mail steamed out of Euston Station at 8.30 p.m. that evening.

THE point of the story has yet to come.

The major was none other than William Redmond, brother of the famous Irish leader, John Redmond, and Member of Parliament for East Tyrone. No more gallant gentleman ever drew breath. He steadfastly refused to take a cushy job behind the lines, to which his age and health entitled him, but fought gallantly with his men of the 16th Irish Division all through the monotonous days of trench warfare.

Redmond was killed at the battle of Messines at the head of his company shortly after the incident here narrated. His death was mourned by all his countrymen, and not the least by the men of the 36th Ulster Division, with whom he went into battle on 7th June 1917. The names of the grand old Southern Irish regiments, like the Connaught Rangers, Royal Irish Regiment, the Munster Fusiliers, and, last but not least, the Dublin Fusiliers, have disappeared from the roster of regular troops. But the flower of them all was Major Willie Redmond, a civilian and a politician, who had the heart of a lion and the courtesy of kings. None of the older generation of fighting-men will ever forget him. Especially is he honoured by two young fledglings of those long-forgotten days, now alas, two near-old gentlemen, who, once in a while, raise their glasses to him in silent salutation.

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## Better Daffodils, Please

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**D**AFFODILS are an investment. You plant them and then they go on flowering year after year for years. When I lived in Kent I planted around the base of each dessert apple-tree a ring of daffodils. Each tree had a different variety, and for ten years after that we had a wonderful display in the spring. There were the daffodils below and the apple-blossoms above. I have always been grateful to Mr D. E. Horton, who for many years was the Bulb Adviser to the Lincolnshire County Council. He has now transferred his affections to Cornwall, where he is producing the most lovely daffodils in the Trenowth Valley. Mr Horton has taught me much about daffodil-growing.

After all, the narcissus or daffodil is one of the oldest flowers known. It was referred to by Homer and Socrates, and even the Prophet Mohammed said: 'He that hath two cakes, let him sell one of them for some narcissus flowers, for bread is food for the body but narcissus flowers are food for the soul.' Plant then, and, if in grass, arrange drifts to get a natural effect or, if in rings, put the bulbs around trees, spacing them so that they are about 6 inches apart. If you want to have the display in formal beds, then the bulbs may be 9 inches apart, and you can have wallflowers or forget-me-nots in between.

Daffodils have the advantage that they succeed in shade almost as well as in sun. Most prefer to use the long-trumpeted varieties for bedding, and when this is done it is better to stick to one variety for each bed rather than to attempt to mix the various types. The only exception to the rule, perhaps, is in the case of the shorter-trumpeted daffodils, which may be interplanted, if desired, with the white-narcissus types. The beginner, however, should never attempt any complicated pattern but should stick to a simple scheme. I have found the following most suitable for formal bedding—Emperor, Spring Glory, Victoria, Whistler, and Winter Gold. All of these are long-trumpet varieties, and in the medium- or short-cup sections I can recommend Bonfire, Carlton, Criterion, Marian Cran, Monte

Carlo, Mrs Barclay, and Scarlet Elegance.

We now come to the growing of the bulbs in bowls or pots for the house. Bulbs always look best in bowls of a fair depth. The bowls should be of plain colours, preferably dark green or terra-cotta. The advantage of bowls is that they can be placed on polished furniture or tablecloths without making any stain. Most householders like to grow the daffodils in fibre, because this is clean and holds the moisture well. It is usually bought already mixed with a certain amount of oyster-shell, but before being used it should be thoroughly moistened in a galvanised bath filled with water. When the soaked fibre has been pressed down well in the bowls the excess water can be drained away.

Place a layer in position, of such depth that when the daffodil bulb is actually sitting on the fibre its nose or tip is just peeping over the rim of the bowl. Then put more fibre around and clamp down tightly. It is usually better to plant so that the bulbs are just not touching one another. Get the planting done as early as possible—that is as soon as you can buy the bulbs—and then put the bowls out of doors on a hard path or concrete yard and cover them with horticultural peat to the depth of at least 4 inches. This is better than putting them into a cupboard in the dark in the house. Daffodils must be kept in the dark for at least eight weeks.

The following daffodils and narcissi do particularly well in bowls in the house—Golden Harvest, Van Wavering's Giant, Winter Gold, and Dawson City. These are all trumpets. For double narcissi, I like Daphne, Irene Copeland, and Twink, and, in the case of the Poeticus varieties, Cheerfulness, Glorious, Lorenze Costar, and Scarlet Gem. Care must be taken to purchase firm bulbs from a reliable supplier, and the larger-sized specimens usually flower best in the house.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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## Science at Your Service

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### AN ELECTRIC DRILL-HAMMER

IT has been estimated that about three million holes are made in masonry each week in this country for the purpose of fitting or fixing various attachments. Many of these holes—probably an increasing proportion—must be made in concrete, and with this material ordinary rotary-drilling methods are neither satisfactory nor economical. Nevertheless, most of this hole-making is performed manually as there is a lack of lightweight machinery or low-cost equipment. A device recently made available will convert an ordinary electric-drill into a power-hammer. As the electric-drill is a tool of very common and general use in the building industry, this new attachment to give it a power-hammer capacity seems likely to receive a widespread welcome.

The driving end of the drill-hammer has a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-diameter shank, so that it can be fitted into any chuck that will take a drill  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in diameter or larger. Each revolution of the chuck produces a blow; it is stated, however, that the best results are obtained at speeds of about 2000 revolutions per minute. At this speed a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch hole of 2 inches depth can be made in seasoned concrete in 90 seconds.

The attachment weighs only 2½ lb., so that manual fatigue is minimised and the converted drill can easily be used for overhead work. Adjustment is possible, enabling the blow-strength to be set at light, medium, or heavy. There are only three moving parts in the mechanism, all constructed of hardened steel to withstand the most severe treatment and duty. An automatic clutch ensures that the striking mechanism does not operate until the jumper is pressed against the masonry and also, of course, that striking ceases immediately contact pressure is relieved. A further advantage of this ingenious instrument is its compact size: 10 inches long, with a maximum diameter of 1½ inches, it fits into any tool-kit. The British company manufacturing the drill-hammer attachment has a world-wide reputation in the specialised field of drilling and hole-making.

### A PEN FOR GLASS-ENGRAVING

A diamond-pointed pen for writing or engraving upon glass seems worthy of attention. Designs of all kinds, artistic or utilitarian, can be drawn with it upon wine-glasses, tumblers, water sets, etc. At first thought, this may seem an instrument for commercial use by glassware manufacturers, but it could also become the means of opening yet another branch of amateur or semi-amateur art. Glass-engraving could become as domestic an occupation or hobby as the hand-painting of pottery and chinaware.

### A FERRET-LOCATOR

The ferret is an excellent foil for the rabbit, but one disadvantage of this useful animal is its tendency to get lost underground. A prominent manufacturing company in the agricultural-machinery field has produced a radio-detection unit. A harness is fitted to the ferret and this harness carries a small coil. Instead of the ordinary line commonly used with ferrets, a flexible wire is used and attached to the coil. Electrical signals can be transmitted to the coil by a vibrator worked off a small dry-battery. With a portable combined aerial and receiving-set and headphones as the pick-up unit, it is possible to locate the ferret underground within a few inches once the vibrator signals are switched on.

### A NOVEL KITCHEN FITMENT

Designed for attachment to the undersides of wall cabinets or shelves, this fitting will lessen the space problem in many modern kitchens, and keep various substances of everyday use within full view and easy reach. It is a compact row of thick glass drawers with patent pouring lips and easy-grip handles. They are ideally suited for holding any loose grocery substance frequently used in the kitchen. An obvious advantage in the choice of glass as the constructional material is that it can be seen when the stock of any grocery substance is running low. The fitment is made in three standard lengths—30½, 35½, and 40½ inches long.

## SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

### PEAT SEEDLING-POTS

A new type of pot for seedlings, believed to have originated in Germany, is now available here and should interest all gardeners who raise their own plants in a greenhouse or frame, and it should also be of considerable economic value to commercial growers. The pots are pressed blocks of dried sphagnum-moss peat. A complete block will have a dozen or two dozen holed sections; each section has already been partially cut so that gentle breaking-pressure applied by hand will readily separate it from the rest of the block. The holes are cup-shaped and can be quickly filled with a potting soil. Each hole can then receive a single seed, or two or three seeds where it is intended to single the best seedling at an early stage. Before the operation of filling with soil and sowing, the block is soaked with water; warm water is said to penetrate the dried peat-moss more rapidly. The roots of the developing seedling can move freely through the peat-moss. Further watering is required when the peat-moss block is seen to be drying out.

When the seedlings are ready for planting out, each section with its one plant is broken off the block and the whole section—the plant and the section itself—is planted. There is thus no disturbance to the young root-system unless the seedlings have been left so long that their roots have penetrated beyond the interfaces of their single sections. At the same time one dozen or two dozen seedlings, while being raised under glass, can be handled in single operations, just as if they were being raised in a box. The blocks are available in two sizes, to suit smaller and larger types of plants. Apart from the cultural advantages they offer, the peat-moss blocks are remarkably cheap.

### A PACKAGE-SEALING MACHINE

A compact and solid machine that seals packages with double-bonded cellulose tape should not only save labour in shops, offices, and factories, but also provide a more attractive package. The cellulose-tape used is up to one inch in width and is available in a range of nine colours. Sealing is accomplished merely by sliding the package along the top of the machine. Corners can be sealed with short lengths of the tape or the machine can be used to wrap tape completely round a parcel. A third use is as a tape dispenser; for this, tape is pulled to the required length from

the machine and cut off by operating a self-contained and automatic cutter.

The machine itself is sturdily built, has rounded corners, is rust-proof, and is mounted on rubber feet to prevent sliding. In any business in which there is a fair amount of parcelling for despatch the low cost of this package-sealing machine represents but a small capital outlay for the time and trouble it will save.

### FUEL-SAVER FOR CENTRAL-HEATING

A simple appliance for attachment to any type of hot-water boiler is claimed to save up to half the amount of fuel normally used. Briefly, the appliance is an air-tube fitted beneath the firebars; air is fed to this tube at low pressure by an electrically-driven blower. The blower is thermostatically controlled and thus comes into operation whenever the water temperature falls below a pre-set level and cuts out again when the desired maximum temperature is reached. Obviously, the amount of fuel likely to be saved depends upon the amount previously wasted in non-automatic methods of boiler control. Fuel economy is not, however, the only advantage. In many central-heating installations the steady control of hot-water temperature within a desirable range of lower and upper temperatures is in itself a considerable benefit, particularly where frequent attention to the boiler is not easily possible.

### DIAL-REGISTERING CALIPERS

There will be little disagreement with the view that the simplest and often most accurate reading of a measurement is accomplished when the meter or appliance records its verdicts with a pointer moving round a circular dial. A novel dial-reading instrument recently introduced by a British firm is a pocket caliper-gauge. Normally the caliper-points attached to the dial are closed in tip contact. A button on the side of the dial (in the equivalent position of the stop-button on a stop-watch) opens the calipers. Sheet materials of various kinds and thicknesses may then be placed between the caliper-points and the reading is given by the pointer and dial. The range is from zero to  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch, and dial-graduations may be in .005-inch, .001-inch, or .1-millimeter units. In addition to being simple and quick to use, this new type of calipers has the advantage of being a pocket instrument.



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### LIGHTING FOR TELEVISION

A new lighting fitting is specifically designed for providing partial illumination during television reception. The appliance has a shape something like that of an egg-cup. It holds an ordinary 60-watt lamp in a vertical position. The operating switch is in the base. The cup part of the appliance is an upward reflector, the top being fitted with a circular piece of  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch plate-glass. As a result, the light is thrown on to the ceiling. The fitting is finished in bronze stoving-enamel.

### A CLOTHES-DRYER

A cabinet for clothes-drying will be useful even in homes where there is plenty of garden space, for the traditional outdoor method is entirely dependent upon weather. This cabinet occupies less than 2 feet square of floor space, but it is claimed to have the drying capacity of 30 feet of outdoor washing-line. The heat-supply is electric and is incorporated in the cabinet. Maximum consumption is two units per hour. There are three settings for the heat, each operated simply from the switch. The element is totally enclosed within a mesh screen and it works below red-heat, so that scorching is impossible. An indicator-lamp shows when the dryer is on and also illuminates the inside of the cabinet. The cabinet is finished in light cream enamel. Its dimensions are 6 feet 9 inches high; 1 foot 9 inches wide; and 1 foot 7 inches deep.

### HARDWOOD SLEEPERS

A simple but important example of the old principle that invention is mothered by necessity has arisen from the acute shortage in Australia of durable timber for making into rail-sleepers. Nevertheless, Australia has hardwood timber available, notably eucalypt of various species. The normal process for treating timber with preservative involves pressure application at about 200 lb. per square inch. The Australian hardwoods have hitherto been considered unsuitable because preservative fluids scarcely penetrate them. The Commonwealth Forest Products Division has recently shown that application at a pressure of as much as 1000 lb. per square inch achieves good absorption for a number of the species of Australian eucalypt. A pilot plant is now being erected and several thousands of eucalypt sleepers will be so treated and put into experimental service on rail-tracks.

### PIGEON PSYCHOLOGY

An American professor of psychology taught pigeons to play table-tennis (presumably after a fashion) and to play tunes (again the same presumption must be made) by striking piano-keys with their beaks. After this introduction to the human world, the pigeons were taught to use their beaks to operate a machine that paid them for their efforts with bran. The machine was designed so that the amount of bran paid out for so much 'beak work' could be varied with different settings. Thus, it could be set so that a standard amount of bran was paid out at regular intervals of time or of work—that is, after so many minutes or after a set number of beak movements of the keys. Further, it could be set to pay out bran at irregular intervals.

It was found that the pigeons worked harder when it was just about time for their bran wages. It was also found that the pigeons made more effort when they were paid regularly after so much work (piece-work) than when they were paid at regular time-intervals. Above all, the pigeons worked hardest when the bran reward was unpredictable. Pigeons seem disturbingly human in their working outlook! They prefer piece-work to steady time-determined wages, but they like gambling even more.

Perhaps there is some moral in this kind of research that will benefit students of psychology. But should the pigeon be compared with man as a machine-worker? Surely the proper basis of comparison is to see how man reacts to being liberated in unknown country various distances from his home and told to make his own way back? Would men do this as readily as pigeons, just for board and shelter?

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Printed in Great Britain by T. & A. CONSTABLE LTD., Edinburgh.

Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2, and 6 Dean Street, London, W.1.

*Established in Edinburgh 1809*

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